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ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE

VOL. 7 NO. 27 FEBRUARY 1946

DETECTIVE STORIES

Peter and Iris Duluth in
PUZZLE FOR POPPY — *Patrick Quentin* 4

Hercule Poirot in
THE CASE OF THE GOSSIPERS — *Agatha Christie* 41

Paul Dawn in
THE COMIC OPERA MURDERS — *James Yaffe* 54

Cummings Monk in
CUMMINGS MONK — *M. P. Shiel* 66

O'Malley in
BROADWAY MURDER — *William MacHarg* 79

Nick Noble in
LIKE COUNT PALMIERI — *Anthony Boucher* 104

DEPARTMENT

SPEAKING OF CRIME — *Howard Haycraft* 99

CRIME STORIES

THE EARRING — *William Irish* 16

THE NECKLACE — *Jack Moffitt* 86

MR. SIMPSON GOES TO THE DOGS — *Anthony Berkeley* 116

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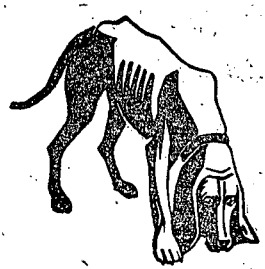

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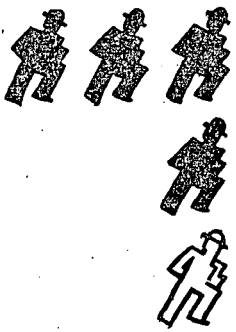

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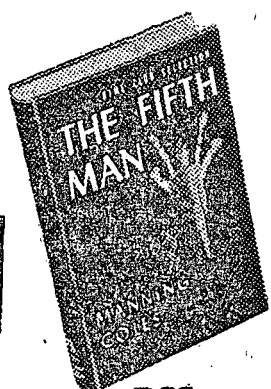

BY MANNING COLES

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IT PAYS TO ADVERTISE

It was S. S. Van Dine who first used the full strategic power of continuity titles. The recurring similarity of his titles (with only the key-word changed from book to book) not only established a personal association between his pen-name and his books but also developed in the reader's mind a psychological acceptance for his future books. All the Van Dine novels were called (with one lamentable exception) THE SO-AND-SO MURDER CASE, *with* SO-AND-SO *always a six-letter name or word like* BENSON, GREENE, KENNEL, *and* BISHOP. *Three years after Van Dine inaugurated his title pattern, Ellery Queen founded a title-dynasty of his own and for nine novels we consistently used the formula of* THE ROMAN HAT MYSTERY. *In our case, the second word was always the name of a country or nationality, in the adjectival form, and the third word the name of a concrete object. Thus, after* THE ROMAN HAT MYSTERY *such titles as* THE DUTCH SHOE MYSTERY *and* THE CHINESE ORANGE MYSTERY *proclaimed a new book by Ellery Queen.*

Van Dine could have pursued his pattern indefinitely — there are an almost infinite variety of six-letter words and names in the English language. But after nine Queen combinations, we found ourselves suffering from acute title-anemia. True, we had not yet resorted to THE PERSIAN RUG MYSTERY *or* THE SWEDISH MATCH MYSTERY; *but facing such bottom-of-the-barrel scrapings and keenly conscious of the finite limitations of geography, we abandoned continuity in favor of such diverse titles as* CALAMITY TOWN *and* THE MURDERER IS A FOX. *It is interesting to note, however, that Van Wyck Mason later devised a variation of the Queen formula, using the name of a city instead of a country — as in* THE SHANGHAI BUND MURDERS *and* THE BUDAPEST PARADE MURDERS.

Other detective-story writers have also aimed, in their choice of titles, at this "shock of recognition." The immortal saga of Father Brown is an example of cumulative consistency: THE INNOCENCE OF, THE WISDOM OF, THE INCREDULITY OF, THE SECRET OF, *and* THE SCANDAL OF FATHER BROWN *prove that the peerless Chesterton was also a student of mnemonics. Georges Simenon's three volumes of short stories have a titular uniformity:* THE THIRTEEN CULPRITS, THE THIRTEEN ENIGMAS, *and* THE THIRTEEN MYSTERIES. *H. C. Bailey's Mr. Fortune series reveals a quasi-continuity, built like the Father Brown titles around the protagonist's name. But the writer who deserves first prize for ingenuity, who vanquished all competitors by the sheer brilliance of his schematic conception, is Anthony Abbot.*

Perhaps you don't realize the extraordinary cunning of Mr. Abbot's title-continuity. To refresh your memory, some of his Thatcher Colt books

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are called ABOUT THE MURDER OF THE CLERGYMAN'S MISTRESS, ABOUT THE MURDER OF THE CIRCUS QUEEN, *and* ABOUT THE MURDER OF A STARTLED LADY. *Even the two Thatcher Colt short stories retain the basic uniiy — "About the Disappearance of Agatha King" and "About the Perfect Crime of Mr. Digberry." This title plan may seem a trifle unwieldy, but its slight clumsiness is deliberately designed, with malice aforethought. You see, Fulton Oursler (the real name of Anthony Abbot) had shrewdly noticed that most book lists, especially those printed for and by libraries, are arranged alphabetically — either by author's name or story title. This arbitrary method of tabulation places Queen, for example, far down on any authors' list, Van Dine even deeper, Edgar Wallace deeper still, and poor Zangwill usually at the very bottom. But where is Anthony Abbot? How many author's names can precede the A-b-b of Abbot — admitting that as yet there is no detective-story writer calling himself Aaron Aardvark. And how many book titles can normally come before the A-b of* ABOUT THE MURDER OF WHOEVER-IT-IS? *By either system of cataloguing, author's name or book title, Mr. Abbot assured himself top-of-the-list!*

All of which brings us to the author at hand — Patrick Quentin, alias Q. Patrick, alias Jonathan Stagge. Patrick Quentin is a firm believer in and devout disciple of old-fashioned title-continuity. Already he has strung together PUZZLE FOR FOOLS, PUZZLE FOR PLAYERS, PUZZLE FOR PUPPETS, *and* PUZZLE FOR WANTONS, *featuring Peter Duluth, detective. Now, in his first Peter Duluth short story (more accurately, his first Peter and Iris Duluth short story) Mr. Quentin continues the continuity.*

"Puzzle for Poppy" is a delightfully wacky yarn. You've read or heard of those screwy wills in which a huge fortune is left (usually by a spinster) to a favorite pet. Well, meet one of the richest canines in the world — an affectionate St. Bernard, no less. Imagine a case in which a beautiful St. Bernard is the heroine who is in danger of her life! As Iris Duluth says: "Really, this shouldn't happen to a dog!"

PUZZLE FOR POPPY

by PATRICK QUENTIN

YES, Miss Crump," snapped Iris into the phone. "No, Miss Crump. Oh, nuts, Miss Crump."

My wife flung down the receiver.

"Well?" I asked.

"She won't let us use the patio. It's that dog, that great fat St. Bernard. It mustn't be disturbed."

"Why?"

"It has to be alone with its beautiful

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thoughts. It's going to become a mother. Peter, it's revolting. There must be something in the lease."

"There isn't," I said.

When I'd rented our half of this La Jolla hacienda for my shore leave, the lease specified that all rights to the enclosed patio belonged to our eccentric co-tenant. It oughtn't to have mattered, but it did because Iris had recently skyrocketed to fame as a movie star and it was impossible for us to appear on the streets without being mobbed. For the last couple of days we had been virtually beleaguered in our apartment. We were crazy about being beleaguered together, but even Héloise and Abelard needed a little fresh air once in a while.

That's why the patio was so important.

Iris was staring through the locked French windows at the forbidden delights of the patio. Suddenly she turned.

"Peter, I'll die if I don't get things into my lungs — ozone and things. We'll just have to go to the beach."

"And be torn limb from limb by your public again?"

"I'm sorry, darling. I'm terribly sorry." Iris unzippered herself from her housecoat and scrambled into slacks and a shirt-waist. She tossed me my naval hat. "Come, Lieutenant — to the slaughter."

When we emerged on the street, we collided head on with a man carrying groceries into the house. As we disentangled ourselves from celery stalks, there was a click and a squeal of delight followed by a powerful whistle. I turned to see a small girl who had been lying in wait with a camera. She was an unsightly little girl with sandy pigtails and a brace on her teeth.

"Geeth," she announced. "I can get two buckth for thith thnap from Barney Thtone. He'th thappy about you, Mith Duluth."

Other children, materializing in response to her whistle, were galloping toward us. The grocery man came out of the house. Passers-by stopped, stared and closed in — a woman in scarlet slacks, two sailors, a flurry of bobby-soxers, a policeman.

"This," said Iris grimly, "is the end."

She escaped from her fans and marched back to the two front doors of our hacienda. She rang the buzzer on the door that wasn't ours. She rang persistently. At length there was the clatter of a chain sliding into place and the door opened wide enough to reveal the face of Miss Crump. It was a small, faded face with a most uncordial expression.

"Yes?" asked Miss Crump.

"We're the Duluths," said Iris. "I just called you. I know about your dog, but . . ."

"Not *my* dog," corrected Miss Crump. "Mrs. Wilberframe's dog. The late Mrs. Wilberframe of Glendale who has a nephew and a niece-in-law of whom I know a great deal in Ogden Bluffs, Utah. At least, they *ought* to be in Ogden Bluffs."

This unnecessary information was

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flung at us like a challenge. Then Miss Crump's face flushed into sudden, dimpled pleasure.

"Duluth! Iris Duluth. You're *the* Iris Duluth of the movies?"

"Yes," said Iris.

"Oh, why didn't you tell me over the phone? My favorite actress! How exciting! Poor thing — mobbed by your fans. Of course you may use the patio. I will give you the key to open your French windows. Any time."

Miraculously the chain was off the door. It opened halfway and then stopped. Miss Crump was staring at me with a return of suspicion.

"You *are* Miss Duluth's husband?"

"Mrs. Duluth's husband," I corrected her. "Lieutenant Duluth."

She still peered. "I mean, you have proof?"

I was beyond being surprised by Miss Crump. I fumbled from my wallet a dog-eared snapshot of Iris and me in full wedding regalia outside the church. Miss Crump studied it carefully and then returned it.

"You must please excuse me. What a sweet bride! It's just that I can't be too careful — for Poppy."

"Poppy?" queried Iris. "The St. Bernard?"

Miss Crump nodded. "It is Poppy's house, you see. Poppy pays the rent."

"The dog," said Iris faintly, "pays the rent?"

"Yes, my dear. Poppy is very well-to-do. She is hardly more than a puppy, but she is one of the richest dogs, I suppose, in the whole world."

Although we entertained grave doubts as to Miss Crump's sanity, we were soon in swimming suits and stepping through our open French windows into the sunshine of the patio. Miss Crump introduced us to Poppy.

In spite of our former prejudices, Poppy disarmed us immediately. She was just a big, bouncing, natural girl unspoiled by wealth. She greeted us with great thumps of her tail. She leaped up at Iris, dabbing at her cheek with a long, pink tongue. Later, when we had settled on striped mattresses under orange trees, she curled into a big clumsy ball at my side and laid her vast muzzle on my stomach.

"Look, she likes you." Miss Crump was glowing. "Oh, I knew she would!"

Iris, luxuriating in the sunshine, asked the polite question. "Tell us about Poppy. How did she make her money?"

"Oh, she did not make it. She inherited it." Miss Crump sat down on a white iron chair. "Mrs. Wilberframe was a very wealthy woman. She was devoted to Poppy."

"And left her all her money?" I asked.

"Not quite all. There was a little nest egg for me. I was her companion, you see, for many years. But I am to look after Poppy. That is why I received the nest egg. Poppy pays me a generous salary too." She fingered nondescript beads at her throat. "Mrs. Wilberframe was anxious for Poppy to have only the best and I am sure I try to do the right thing. Poppy has the master bedroom, of course. I take the little one in front. And then;

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if Poppy has steak for dinner, I have hamburger." She stared intensely. "I would not have an easy moment if I felt that Poppy did not get the best."

Poppy, her head on my stomach, coughed. She banged her tail against the flagstones apologetically.

Iris reached across me to pat her. "Has she been rich for long?"

"Oh, no, Mrs. Wilberframe passed on only a few weeks ago." Miss Crump paused. "And it has been a great responsibility for me." She paused again and then blurted: "You're my friends, aren't you? Oh, I am sure you are. Please, please, won't you help me? I am all alone and I am so frightened."

"Frightened?" I looked up and, sure enough, her little bird face was peaked with fear.

"For Poppy." Miss Crump leaned forward. "Oh, Lieutenant, it is like a nightmare. Because I know. I just know they are trying to murder her!"

"They?" Iris sat up straight.

"Mrs. Wilberframe's nephew and his wife. From Ogden Bluffs, Utah."

"You mentioned them when you opened the door."

"I mention them to everyone who comes to the house. You see, I do not know what they look like and I do not want them to think I am not on my guard."

I watched her. She might have looked like a silly spinster with a bee in her bonnet. She didn't. She looked nice and quite sane, only scared.

"Oh, they are not good people. Not at all. There is nothing they would not stoop to. Back in Glendale, I found pieces of meat in the front yard. Poisoned meat, I know. And on a lonely road, they shot at Poppy. Oh, the police laughed at me. A car backfiring, they said. But I know differently. I know they won't stop till Poppy is dead." She threw her little hands up to her face. "I ran away from them in Glendale. That is why I came to La Jolla. But they have caught up with us. I know. Oh, dear, poor Poppy who is so sweet without a nasty thought in her head."

Poppy, hearing her name mentioned, smiled and panted.

"But this nephew and his wife from Ogden Bluffs, why should they want to murder her?" My wife's eyes were gleaming with a detective enthusiasm I knew of old. "Are they after her money?"

"Of course," said Miss Crump passionately. "It's the will. The nephew is Mrs. Wilberframe's only living relative, but she deliberately cut him off and I am sure I do not blame her. All the money goes to Poppy and — er — Poppy's little ones."

"Isn't the nephew contesting a screwy will like that?" I asked.

"Not yet. To contest a will takes a great deal of money — lawyers fees and things. It would be much, much cheaper for him to kill Poppy. You see, one thing is not covered by the will. If Poppy were to die before she became a mother, the nephew would inherit the whole estate. Oh, I have done everything in my power. The moment the — er — suitable season arrived, I found a husband for Poppy.

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In a few weeks now, the — the little ones are expected. But these next few weeks . . ."

Miss Crump dabbed at her eyes with a small handkerchief. "Oh, the Glendale police were most unsympathetic. They even mentioned the fact that the sentence for shooting or killing a dog in this state is shockingly light — a small fine at most. I called the police here and asked for protection. They said they'd send a man around some time but they were hardly civil. So you see, there is no protection from the law and no redress. There is no one to help me."

"You've got us," said Iris in a burst of sympathy.

"Oh . . . oh . . ." The handkerchief fluttered from Miss Crump's face. "I knew you were my friends. You dear, dear things. Oh, Poppy, they are going to help us."

Poppy, busy licking my stomach, did not reply. Somewhat appalled by Iris' hasty promise but ready to stand by her, I said:

"Sure, we'll help, Miss Crump. First, what's the nephew's name?"

"Henry. Henry Blodgett. But he won't use that name. Oh, no, he will be too clever for that."

"And you don't know what he looks like?"

"Mrs. Wilberframe destroyed his photograph many years ago when he bit her as a small boy. With yellow curls, I understand. That is when the trouble between them started."

"At least you know what age he is?"

"He should be about thirty."

"And the wife?" asked Iris.

"I know nothing about her," said Miss Crump coldly, "except that she is supposed to be a red-headed person, a former actress."

"And what makes you so sure one or both of them have come to La Jolla?"

Miss Crump folded her arms in her lap. "Last night. A telephone call."

"A telephone call?"

"A voice asking if I was Miss Crump, and then — silence." Miss Crump leaned toward me. "Oh, now they know I am here. They know I never let Poppy out. They know every morning I search the patio for meat, traps. They must realize that the only possible way to reach her is to enter the house."

"Break in?"

Miss Crump shook her tight curls. "It is possible. But I believe they will rely on guile rather than violence. It is against that we must be on our guard. You are the only people who have come to the door since that telephone call. Now anyone else that comes to your apartment or mine, whatever their excuse . . ." She lowered her voice. "Anyone may be Henry Blodgett or his wife and we will have to outwit them."

A fly settled on one of Poppy's valuable ears. She did not seem to notice it. Miss Crump watched us earnestly and then gave a self-scolding cluck.

"Dear me, here I have been burdening you with Poppy's problems and you must be hungry. How about a little salad for luncheon? I always feel

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guilty about eating in the middle of the day when Poppy has her one meal at night. But with guests — yes, and allies — I am sure Mrs. Wilberframe would not have grudged the expense."

With a smile that was half-shy, half-conspiratorial, she fluttered away.

I looked at Iris. "Well," I said, "is she a nut or do we believe her?"

"I rather think," said my wife, "that we believe her."

"Why?"

"Just because." Iris' face wore the entranced expression which had won her so many fans in her last picture. "Oh, Peter, don't you see what fun it will be? A beautiful St. Bernard in peril. A wicked villain with golden curls who bit his aunt."

"He won't have golden curls any more," I said. "He's a big boy now."

Iris, her body warm from the sun, leaned over me and put both arms around Poppy's massive neck.

"Poor Poppy," she said. "Really, this shouldn't happen to a dog!"

The first thing happened some hours after Miss Crump's little salad luncheon while Iris and I were still sunning ourselves. Miss Crump, who had been preparing Poppy's dinner and her own in her apartment, came running to announce:

"There is a man at the door! He claims he is from the electric light company to read the meter. Oh, dear, if he is legitimate and we do not let him in, there will be trouble with the electric light company and if . . ." She wrung her hands. "Oh, what shall we do?"

I reached for a bathrobe. "You and Iris stay here. And for Mrs. Wilberframe's sake, hang on to Poppy."

I found the man outside the locked front door. He was about thirty with thinning hair and wore an army discharge button. He showed me his credentials. They seemed in perfect order. There was nothing for it but to let him in. I took him into the kitchen where Poppy's luscious steak and Miss Crump's modest hamburger were lying where Miss Crump had left them on the table. I hovered over the man while he located the meter. I never let him out of my sight until he had departed. In answer to Miss Crump's anxious questioning, I could only say that if the man had been Henry Blodgett he knew how much electricity she'd used in the past month — but that was all.

The next caller showed up a few minutes later. Leaving Iris, indignant at being out of things, to stand by Poppy, Miss Crump and I handled the visitor. This time it was a slim, brash girl with bright auburn hair and a navy-blue slack suit. She was, she said, the sister of the woman who owned the hacienda. She wanted a photograph for the newspapers — a photograph of her Uncle William who had just been promoted to Rear Admiral in the Pacific. The photograph was in a trunk in the attic.

Miss Crump, reacting to the unlikeliness of the request, refused entry. The red-head wasn't the type that wilted. When she started talking darkly

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of eviction, I overrode Miss Crump and offered to conduct her to the attic. The girl gave me one quick, experienced look and flounced into the hall.

The attic was reached by the back stairs through the kitchen. I conducted the red-head directly to her claimed destination. There were trunks. She searched through them. At length she produced a photograph of a limp young man in a raccoon coat.

"My Uncle William," she snapped, "as a youth."

"Pretty," I said.

I took her back to the front door. On the threshold she gave me another of her bold, appraising stares.

"You know something?" she said. "I was hoping you'd make a pass at me in the attic."

"Why?" I asked.

"So's I could tear your ears off."

She left. If she had been Mrs. Blodgett, she knew how to take care of herself, she knew how many trunks there were in the attic — and that was all.

Iris and I had dressed and were drinking Daiquiris under a green and white striped umbrella when Miss Crump appeared followed by a young policeman. She was very pleased about the policeman. He had come, she said, in answer to her complaint. She showed him Poppy; she babbled out her story of the Blodgetts. He obviously thought she was a harmless lunatic, but she didn't seem to realize it. After she had let him out, she settled beamingly down with us.

"I suppose," said Iris, "you asked him for his credentials?"

"I . . ." Miss Crump's face clouded. "My dear, you don't think that perhaps he wasn't a real police . . . ?"

"To me," said Iris, "everyone's a Blodgett until proved to the contrary."

"Oh, dear," said Miss Crump.

Nothing else happened. By evening Iris and I were back in our part of the house. Poppy had hated to see us go. We had hated to leave her. A mutual crush had developed between us.

But now we were alone again, the sinister Blodgetts did not seem very substantial. Iris made a creditable *Boeuf Stroganov* from yesterday's leftovers and changed into a lime green négligée which would have inflamed the whole Pacific Fleet. I was busy being a sailor on leave with his girl when the phone rang. I reached over Iris for the receiver, said "Hello," and then sat rigid listening.

It was Miss Crump's voice. But something was horribly wrong with it. It came across hoarse and gasping.

"Come," it said. "Oh, come. The French windows. Oh, please . . ."

The voice faded. I heard the clatter of a dropped receiver.

"It must be Poppy," I said to Iris. "Quick."

We ran out into the dark patio. Across it, I could see the light French windows to Miss Crump's apartment. They were half open, and as I looked Poppy squirmed through to the patio. She bounded toward us, whining.

"Poppy's all right," said Iris. "Quick!"

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We ran to Miss Crump's windows. Poppy barged past us into the living room. We followed. All the lights were on. Poppy had galloped around a high-backed davenport. We went to it and looked over it.

Poppy was crouching on the carpet, her huge muzzle dropped on her paws. She was howling and staring straight at Miss Crump.

Poppy's paid companion was on the floor too. She lay motionless on her back, her legs twisted under her, her small, grey face distorted, her lips stretched in a dreadful smile.

I knelt down by Poppy. I picked up Miss Crump's thin wrist and felt for the pulse. Poppy was still howling. Iris stood, straight and white.

"Peter, tell me. Is she dead?"

"Not quite. But only just not quite. Poison. It looks like strychnine. . . ."

We called a doctor. We called the police. The doctor came, muttered a shocked diagnosis of strychnine poisoning and rushed Miss Crump to the hospital. I asked if she had a chance. He didn't answer. I knew what that meant. Soon the police came and there was so much to say and do and think that I hadn't time to brood about poor Miss Crump.

We told Inspector Green the Blodgett story. It was obvious to us that somehow Miss Crump had been poisoned by them in mistake for Poppy. Since no one had entered the house that day except the three callers, one of them, we said, must have been a Blodgett. All the Inspector had to do, we said, was to locate those three people and find out which was a Blodgett.

Inspector Green watched us poker-faced and made no comment. After he'd left, we took the companionless Poppy back to our part of the house. She climbed on the bed and stretched out between us, her tail thumping, her head flopped on the pillows. We didn't have the heart to evict her. It was not one of our better nights.

Early next morning, a policeman took us to Miss Crump's apartment. Inspector Green was waiting in the living room. I didn't like his stare.

"We've analyzed the hamburger she was eating last night," he said. "There was enough strychnine in it to kill an elephant."

"Hamburger!" exclaimed Iris. "Then that proves she was poisoned by the Blodgetts!"

"Why?" asked Inspector Green.

"They didn't know how conscientious Miss Crump was. They didn't know she always bought steak for Poppy and hamburger for herself. They saw the steak and the hamburger and they naturally assumed the hamburger was for Poppy, so they poisoned that."

"That's right," I cut in. "The steak and the hamburger were lying right on the kitchen table when all three of those people came in yesterday."

"I see," said the Inspector.

He nodded to a policeman who left the room and returned with three people — the balding young man from the electric light company, the red-headed vixen, and the young policeman. None of them looked happy.

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"You're willing to swear," the Inspector asked us, "that these were the only three people who entered this house yesterday."

"Yes," said Iris.

"And you think one of them is either Blodgett or his wife?"

"They've got to be."

Inspector Green smiled faintly. "Mr. Burns here has been with the electric light company for five years except for a year when he was in the army. The electric light company is willing to vouch for that. Miss Curtis has been identified as the sister of the lady who owns this house and the niece of Rear Admiral Moss. She has no connection with any Blodgetts and has never been in Utah." He paused. "As for Officer Patterson, he has been a member of the police force here for eight years. I personally sent him around yesterday to follow up Miss Crump's complaint."

The Inspector produced an envelope from his pocket and tossed it to me. "I've had these photographs of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Blodgett flown from the files of the Ogden Bluffs *Tribune*."

I pulled the photographs out of the envelope. We stared at them. Neither Mr. or Mrs. Blodgett looked at all the sort of person you would like to know. But neither of them bore the slightest resemblance to any of the three suspects in front of us.

"It might also interest you," said the Inspector quietly, "that I've checked with the Ogden Bluffs police. Mr. Blodgett has been sick in bed for over a week and his wife has been nursing him. There is a doctor's certificate to that effect."

Inspector Green gazed down at his hands. They were competent hands. "It looks to me that the whole Blodgett story was built up in Miss Crump's mind — or yours." His grey eyes stared right through us. "If we have to eliminate the Blodgetts and these three people from suspicion, that leaves only two others who had the slightest chance of poisoning the hamburger."

Iris blinked. "Us?"

"You," said Inspector Green almost sadly.

They didn't arrest us, of course. We had no conceivable motive. But Inspector Green questioned us minutely and when he left there was a policeman lounging outside our door.

We spent a harried afternoon racking our brains and getting nowhere. Iris was the one who had the inspiration. Suddenly, just after she had fed Poppy the remains of the *Stroganov*, she exclaimed:

"Good heavens above, of course!"

"Of course, what?"

She spun to me, her eyes shining. "Barney Thtone," she lisped. "Why didn't we realize? Come on!"

She ran out of the house into the street. She grabbed the lounging policeman by the arm.

"You live here," she said. "Who's Barney Stone?"

"Barney Stone?" The policeman stared. "He's the son of the druggist

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on the corner."

Iris raced me to the drugstore. She was attracting quite a crowd. The policeman followed, too.

In the drugstore, a thin young man with spectacles stood behind the prescription counter.

"Mr. Stone?" asked Iris.

His mouth dropped open. "Gee, Miss Duluth. I never dreamed . . . Gee, Miss Duluth, what can I do for you? Cigarettes? An alarm clock?"

"A little girl," said Iris. "A little girl with sandy pigtails and a brace on her teeth. What's her name? Where does she live?"

Barney Stone said promptly: "You mean Daisy Kornfeld. Kind of homely. Just down the block. 712. Miss Duluth, I certainly . . ."

"Thanks," cut in Iris and we were off again with our ever growing escort.

Daisy was sitting in the Kornfeld parlor, glumly thumping the piano. Ushered in by an excited, cooing Mrs. Kornfeld, Iris interrupted Daisy's rendition of *The Jolly Farmer*.

"Daisy, that picture you took of me yesterday to sell to Mr. Stone, is it developed yet?"

"Geeth no, Mith Duluth. I ain't got the developing money yet. Theventy-five thenth. Ma don't give me but a nickel an hour for practithing thith gothdarn piano."

"Here." Iris thrust a ten-dollar bill into her hand. "I'll buy the whole roll. Run get the camera. We'll have it developed right away."

"Geeth." The mercenary Daisy stared with blank incredulity at the ten-dollar bill.

I stared just as blankly myself. I wasn't being bright at all.

I wasn't much brighter an hour later. We were back in our apartment, waiting for Inspector Green. Poppy, all for love, was trying to climb into my lap. Iris, who had charmed Barney Stone into developing Daisy's films, clutched the yellow envelope of snaps in her hand. She had sent our policeman away on a secret mission, but an infuriating passion for the dramatic had kept her from telling or showing me anything. I had to wait for Inspector Green.

Eventually Iris' policeman returned and whispered with her in the hall. Then Inspector Green came. He looked cold and hostile. Poppy didn't like him. She growled. Sometimes Poppy was smart.

Inspector Green said: "You've been running all over town. I told you to stay here."

"I know." Iris' voice was meek. "It's just that I wanted to solve poor Miss Crump's poisoning."

"Solve it?" Inspector Green's query was skeptical.

"Yes. It's awfully simple really. I can't imagine why we didn't think of it from the start."

"You mean you know who poisoned her?"

"Of course." Iris smiled, a maddening smile. "Henry Blodgett."

"But . . ."

"Check with the airlines. I think you'll find that Blodgett flew in from

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Ogden Bluffs a few days ago and flew back today. As for his being sick in bed under his wife's care, I guess that'll make Mrs. Blodgett an accessory before the fact, won't it?"

Inspector Green was pop-eyed.

"Oh, it's my fault really," continued Iris. "I said no one came to the house yesterday except those three people. There was someone else, but he was so ordinary, so run-of-the-mill, that I forgot him completely."

I was beginning to see then. Inspector Green snapped: "And this run-of-the-mill character?"

"The man," said Iris sweetly, "who had the best chance of all to poison the hamburger, *the man who delivered it* — the man from the Supermarket."

"We don't have to guess. We have proof." Iris fumbled in the yellow envelope. "Yesterday morning as we were going out, we bumped into the man delivering Miss Crump's groceries. Just at that moment, a sweet little girl took a snap of us. This snap."

She selected a print and handed it to Inspector Green. I moved to look at it over his shoulder.

"I'm afraid Daisy is an impressionistic photographer," murmured Iris. "That hip on the right is me. The buttocks are my husband. But the figure in the middle — quite a masterly likeness of Henry Blodgett, isn't it? Of course, there's the grocery apron, the unshaven chin . . ."

She was right. Daisy had only winged Iris and me but with the grocery man she had scored a direct hit. And the grocery man was unquestionably Henry Blodgett.

Iris nodded to her policeman. "Sergeant Blair took a copy of the snap around the neighborhood groceries. They recognized Blodgett at the Supermarket. They hired him day before yesterday. He made a few deliveries this morning, including Miss Crump's, and took a powder without his pay."

"Well . . ." stammered Inspector Green. "Well . . ."

"Just how many charges can you get him on?" asked my wife hopefully. "Attempted homicide, conspiracy to defraud, illegal possession of poisonous drugs. . . . The rat, I hope you give him the works when you get him."

"We'll get him all right," said Inspector Green.

Iris leaned over and patted Poppy's head affectionately.

"Don't worry, darling. I'm sure Miss Crump will get well and we'll throw a lovely christening party for your little strangers. . . ."

Iris was right about the Blodgetts. Henry got the works. And his wife was held as an accessory. Iris was right about Miss Crump too. She is still in the hospital but improving steadily and will almost certainly be well enough to attend the christening party.

Meanwhile, at her request, Poppy is staying with us, awaiting maternity with rollicking unconcern.

It's nice having a dog who pays the rent.

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THE DOUBLE-NAME CLUB

We take this editorial excuse to announce the founding and formation of a new and exclusive society — The Double-Name Club. It is a curious organization, this clique of crimeteers: it has no officers, it collects no dues, it holds no meetings; it offers no benefits or emoluments to its members but by the same token it imposes no duties on them. Indeed, it is a purely honorary association, hatched only a few minutes ago in your Editor's brain, and unless its still unsuspecting members happen to be reading this particular page, they have no idea either of the club's existence or their affiliation as charter members!

The qualifications for membership in The Double-Name Club are strict and precise. First, each member must be a writer of detective stories; second, each member must be a contributor to "Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine"; third and last, each member must write detective stories under at least two different names — hence the title, The Double-Name Club.

Until this issue of EQMM there were a mere seven members in the still absent-from-mind coterie — six men and one woman. The masculine membership included your Editor by virtue of their alter ego, Barnaby Ross; John Dickson Carr otherwise Carter Dickson; Anthony Boucher alias H. H. Holmes; James Hilton once-upon-a-time Glen Trevor; Francis Iles likewise Anthony Berkeley; and Q. Patrick who is also Patrick Quentin, as well as, on occasion, Jonathan Stagge. The distaff side was represented by the charming and delicate Craig Rice who doubles as the tough and robust Michael Venning.

With this issue of EQMM a new member automatically adds his double-monicker to the roster of the club — another vote for the men. The new 'tec-twin is William Irish, an appellative disguise for our old friend Cornell Woolrich.

We have known for a long time that Cornell Woolrich and William Irish are one and the same but we have never felt free either to unmask Woolrich or expose Irish. (We remember too poignantly the days when we guarded the "duality" of Ellery Queen and Barnaby Ross, even to the extent of making "joint" lecture tours crosscountry with one-half of Queen playing Ellery and the other half impersonating Barnaby, and not even the lecture agent aware he had hired only one author!) Obviously our friend Cornell also possessed a split literary personality — "black" Woolrich and "phantom" Irish — but we kept his double identity a "trade" secret.

But like murder, "misnomers" will out. Last year, for better, for worse,

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Mr. Woolrich let the cat out of the bag. . . . You'll recall that in our September 1943 issue we reprinted that excellent tale, "After-Dinner Story," by Cornell Woolrich. On November 15, 1944, J. B. Lippincott Company published a collection of six shorts called AFTER-DINNER STORY. *The title story of the book was the same story we brought to you in EQMM. But the Lippincott volume was signed not by Cornell Woolrich but by William Irish — so the "trade" secret was now public property.*

You will find "The Earring" a perfect example of Woolrich and Irish at his combined best — powerful in its atmosphere of terror and suspense and with a final whiplash of surprise that will remind you (if you needed reminding) of the subtle craftsmanship that Woolrich builds into every Irish story, and vice versa.

THE EARRING

by WILLIAM IRISH

THE latchkey jammed, and I had to stand there shaking as if I had St. Vitus's dance before I could get it to work right. My wrists shook, my arms shook, my shoulders shook, trying to force it around. And above all else, my heart shook with the terror.

I was shaking so, it even made the empty milk-bottle standing outside the door sing out. I'd accidentally touched it with the tip of my shoe, I guess. The day maid had a note for the milkman curled up in the neck of it, in the shape of a little paper funnel.

I took the key out, drew a deep breath, and tried again. This time the door opened like pie. There hadn't been anything the matter with the key; I'd been holding it upside down, that was all. I sidled in, eased the door silently closed again behind me — and Mrs. James Shaw was home.

The hall clock chimed four times. They say you can only die once, but I died four times, once for each chime-strike. Not that I wasn't supposed to be out. I could have even rung the doorbell, and saved myself all that wrestling with the key. But I couldn't face anyone, not even Jimmy, just then. Even if he'd just said, "Have a good time at the night club with the Perrys?", even if he'd just looked at me, I would have busted down and tried to crawl into his lapel. I needed to be alone, I needed time to pull myself together.

He'd left the light on for me in the hall. He was still up, working away in the library on his income-tax report. He had the door closed, but I could tell by the light shining out under the sill of it. He always waited until the last minute, like most taxpayers do, and then he had to sit up all night to beat the deadline on it. That was why

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he'd had to miss the party, send me out with the Perrys alone.

It was just a coincidence, but I could thank my lucky stars he'd had to finish it tonight.

That was just about the only thing in the whole mess there was to be thankful for. That at least there wouldn't be any trouble between Jimmy and me.

I tiptoed down the hall toward our bedroom, slipped in, closed the door behind me. I gave it the lights and took a couple of deep body-sobs that had been ganged up in me for the past three-quarters of an hour or more.

The glass showed me a golden wreck staggering across the room toward it. All glittery on the outside: gold-sheath dress, diamonds everywhere there was room to hang them, around my neck, around my wrists, swinging from my ears. Not so glittery on the inside: plenty scared.

I sat down in front of the glass, held my head with both hands for a minute.

When I got my second wind, the first thing I did was open my gold evening pouch and take out — what I had in it. The style ran to big evening bags this season, and that was a good thing for me. I'd needed a lot of room tonight. The letters made a bulky packet. And the little gun I'd taken along, just to be on the safe side, that took up room, too. The ten thousand dollars in cash didn't take up any room, because I hadn't brought that back with me, I'd swapped that for the letters.

That gives you the whole story. Well, maybe not quite, so in fairness to myself I'd better run over it just once. His name was Carpenter. The letters had been written to him five years ago, three years before I even knew there was a Jimmy Shaw in the world. I should have been safe enough. But he'd made use of a trick to bring them up to date. It was a clever trick. I granted him that.

Here's what he'd done. At the time I'd originally written them, we'd both been at the same seaside resort hotel, only on different floors. I'd had them delivered to him personally by bellboys and what not, not sent through the mail. In other words he'd received the envelopes sealed and addressed to him in my handwriting, but unstamped and undated by any post-office cancellation.

He must have been a careful letter-opener, the kind that just makes a neat slit down the side instead of tearing them ragged. He'd pasted over the slits with strips of thin wax paper, put a brand new stamp on each one, added his present street and city address beneath the name, and then sent them back through the mail a second time — to himself. One at a time, over a period of weeks, careful to match the mailing date with the original date inside at the top of the note paper. Get the idea?

Each one had come back to him with this year's date postmarked on the outside, to match the five-year-old date on the inside. I hadn't bothered inserting the year, just the day of the week and the month. He'd

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had the devil's own luck with those cancellations, too. Not one of them had blurred or smudged; the "1941" stood out clear as a diamond. Then when he'd gotten them back, he'd peeled off the wax paper.

In other words, he'd turned a lot of gushy but harmless mash notes written to him by a young girl into a batch of deadly dangerous, incriminating letters written to him by a respectable and socially prominent young married woman with a wealthy husband. And he'd done it by simply sticking stamps on them. What an investment! At an expenditure of two cents a head, he'd gotten back one thousand dollars on each one. There had been ten that were usable; the others either had been signed with my full family name or had things in them that dated them as from that summer.

You'd think a corny set-up like that, which they don't even use in the movies any more, wouldn't go over. I should have refused to pay off, gone straight to Jimmy about it. But it's so easy to be brave until you're face to face with something like that. He'd had me over a barrel. His technique had been beautifully simple and direct. He'd first called me three or four days ago. He'd said, "Remember me? Well, I need ten thousand dollars."

I'd hung up.

He'd called right back again before I could even move away from the phone. "You didn't let me finish what I was saying. I have some letters that you wrote to me. I thought maybe that you'd prefer to have them back than to have them lying around loose."

I'd hung up again.

He'd called back late that same night, after midnight. Luckily, I answered, and not Jimmy. "I'm giving you one more chance. One of them's in the mail already, enclosed in an envelope addressed to your husband. He'll get one every morning, until they're all used up. And the price for the rest'll go up a thousand, each time I send one out. I'm sending the first one to your house and tipping you off ahead of time, so you'll still have a chance to sidetrack it before he sees it. After that, they'll go to his club, where you can't get your hands on them. Think it over. Call me tomorrow at eleven, and let me know what you've decided." And he gave me his number.

I sneaked the letter off the mail tray before Jimmy saw it. I read it over. It should have been written on asbestos. "All night I lie awake and dream of you . . . I'd follow you to the ends of the earth. . . ." No one would realize that I had hoped he would marry me.

I saw what he'd done. How could I prove I'd written them in 1936 and not 1941? My handwriting hadn't changed. Note paper doesn't show any particular age, especially the deckled gray kind I'd used then and was still using now, with just a crest instead of a monogram. The tables turned. I could hardly wait for eleven to come. I hung around the phone all morning.

When he answered, all I said, breathlessly, was: "That'll be all right. Just

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tell me where and when."

Tonight had been when, and the flat I'd just come from had been where. And ten thousand dollars out of my own private checking account had been how much.

At least I'd gotten them all back and it was over. Or is blackmail ever over with? Is it a game that you can ever beat?

There was a fireplace in our bedroom, and I burned the letters in there, one by one; contents and envelopes and spiked cancellations. When the last of them was gone in smoke, I felt a lot better. For about three and a half minutes.

I started to strip off the sparkle, and I opened the little embossed leather case I kept it all in. It was divided into compartments for each variety. The bracelets went into one, the rings into another, and so on. I came to the one for the earrings last. I took the right one off first and pitched it in. Then I reached for the left, and just got air and the bare lobe of my ear. No left earring.

For a minute I sat there without moving, and my face got white and my heart got chilly. Then I jumped up, and shook out my dress, and looked all around on the floor. I was just stalling, I knew where I must have dropped it, but I didn't want to let on to myself.

I knew it hadn't been at the club with the Perrys, and I knew it hadn't been in the first taxi, going over to the Other Place. I'd given a sort of shudder just before he opened the door for me, and happened to touch both earrings with my hands. And I knew it hadn't been in the second taxi, from there home, either.

There was only one time I'd moved violently or agitatedly all evening long, and that was over there, when he'd tried to chuck me under the chin after he'd counted over the money, and I'd reared my head back. It must have been right then that it had come off. The catch had been defective anyway.

I had to have it back. Jimmy was taking them down with him tomorrow, to have them repaired. I could tell him I'd lost one of them, but that would uncover my movements. And there was an even more important reason why I had to get it back. If I left it with *him*, the whole thing would start over again as soon as he'd run through the ten thousand I'd just given him. He'd simply use it to bleed me some more. It was an easily recognizable piece of jewelry, made specially for me.

I went over to the door and listened first, to make sure Jimmy was still safely in the library. Not a sound, so it looked as if he was. Then I picked up the extension phone we had in the bedroom and dialed the number of Carpenter's place that he'd given me last night, along with his final ultimatum.

Suppose he denied having found it? Suppose he was far-seeing enough to already figure on it coming in handy as a future pledge? I couldn't add anything to the ten thousand, not until

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next month. My account was down to bedrock. He had to give it back to me!

I kept signaling, and he didn't answer. I knew he must be there. I'd just come from there myself. He might light out the first thing in the morning, but there was no need for him to leave at this ungodly hour of the night. If I was going to sic the police on him, I would have done it before the transaction was concluded, not after. Even if he was asleep, it surely ought to wake him up, the way it was buzzing away at his end.

I hung up, tried it over. No more luck than the first time. It was the right number. I'd used it to notify him of my capitulation. I shook the thing, I squeezed it, I prayed to it. I had to give up finally. I couldn't just sit there listening to it all night. I was good and scared now.

I had to have that earring, even if it meant — going all the way back there in person, at this hour. And there was no place under the sun or the moon I wouldn't have rather returned to than there.

I took the gun with me once more. I didn't think Carpenter could really be cowed by such a midget, but it made me feel a little less defenseless. I unlocked the door and sidled down the hall. If I could only get out without bumping into Jimmy, then when I came back the second time, he could think it was the first time. That I'd stayed late with the Perrys at the club or something.

The light was gone from under the library door! He must have finished and gone out for a walk to clear his head, after battling with those tax-blanks all night. That was all to the good, provided I didn't run into him outside just as I was leaving. The milk-bottle with its paper funnel was still on lonesome duty.

I made it. I was dying to ask the night liftman, when he brought me down, "Did Mr. Shaw go out just a little while ago?" I forced myself not to. It sounded too underhanded.

I gave the cabdriver the address, and slumped back on the seat with a sigh of relief.

When I got out in front of the sinister-looking place I told the driver to wait for me. I looked up the front of it, and I saw just the one lighted window — his. He was up there, and he was still awake. Maybe he'd stepped out for just a minute at the time I'd rung.

I said to the driver, "Have you got a watch on you?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Well, I want you to do something for me. Time me. If I haven't come out in ten minutes, step over and ring the bell. The one that says 'Carpenter' on it." I smiled insincerely. "Just to remind me. I don't want to stay too long, and I have a bad habit of losing track of the time."

"Yes ma'am. Ten minutes."

I went in. The entrance door was supposed to work on a spring lock, but somebody had forgotten to close it, so I passed right through without waiting and started the long climb that I'd

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already made once before. The place was a walk-up!

I knocked mufflédly, when I finally got up to the top. It was the only flat on that floor; an extra story must have been added when the building had been converted to multiple tenancy.

He didn't move, didn't make a sound. I'd expected that. Live dangerously, and a knock on the door can make you freeze. I could visualize him standing at bay somewhere in there, holding his breath.

I knocked again. I inclined my head to the seam, said in a guarded voice: "Let me in. It's me again." I couldn't bring myself to use his name. As far as I was concerned he didn't deserve one, only a number. I had sense enough not to use my own.

He still didn't stir. I wrangled the knob in growing impatience, and the door fell inertly back before me.

I ventured in after it, expecting to find him sighting a gun at me. That was the usual trick they pulled, wasn't it? He wasn't in the main room, he must be in the little darkened bed-alcove. Had lain down in there and forgotten to put the light out in here.

I didn't go in there. There was just a slim chance — a very slim one — that he hadn't found the earring himself yet, that it was still lying around out here unnoticed, and that I might be able to pick it up on my own hook and slip out again without having to accost him. I doubted it very much; it would have been too good to be true. But I started to look just the same.

First I looked all over the sofa where I'd sat riffling through the letters. Then I got down on all fours, gold dress and all, and started to explore the floor, around and under and alongside it. It was a decrepit, top-heavy thing and threw a big shadow behind it from the ceiling light.

My groping hand crept around the corner of it, and nestled into somebody else's, in a macabre gesture of a handclasp. I whipped it back with a bleat of abysmal terror and sprang away, and at the same time I heard a sharp intake of breath.

I stepped around and looked down, and he was lying there. The position of the bulky sofa had hid him from me until now. Did I say just now he deserved a number? He'd gotten one. And it was up.

One arm was flung out along the floor — the one that I'd just touched. He was lying on his back, and his jacket had fallen open. You could see where he'd been shot; it showed on the white of his shirt. It must have gone into his heart; the hole in the fabric and the bloodied encrustation that surrounded it were around that region. The gun he hadn't had time to use had fallen uselessly over to one side.

My first impulse, of course, was to turn and race out. I fought it down. "Find that earring first," I reasoned with myself. "You've got to get it back!" It was more vital to recover it than ever. It wasn't just a case of keeping my presence here from Jimmy's knowledge now, it was a case of keeping it from the police! What was

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blackmail compared to being dragged into a murder case?

I found myself doing something I wouldn't have believed I had the nerve to do: bending down over him and going through all his pockets. He didn't have it on him. He didn't have the ten thousand cash any more either, but I didn't care about that; it wasn't identifiable.

I crouched there, suddenly motionless. My hand had just then accidentally, as might have been expected, fleetingly contacted his in the course of my search. The brief touch was repellent, yes, but that wasn't what made me freeze rigid like that, stare unseeingly along the floor before me. It was this: the touch of his clammy skin was already cool, far cooler than my own. My sketchy knowledge of such matters was sufficient to tell me that meant he'd been dead some little time, at least half an hour or an hour. The point was, he'd certainly been dead by the time I'd come into the room just now.

And belatedly, like a sort of long-delayed and not at all funny mental double take, I was just remembering that I'd heard a sharp intake of breath at the moment I'd jolted back and given my own strangled little cry of discovery just now.

If he was dead, he hadn't made the sound. And you can't cry out, and still draw in your breath, so I hadn't either.

Not a muscle moved. Just my optic nerves. My eyes traveled over the floor to the arched, doorless entrance to the dark sleeping-alcove, and the musty green hanging, bunched together, that hung down on one side of it. It hung perfectly motionless, just as everything else in the place was perfectly motionless — including myself and the dead man on the floor. But it hung just short of the floor — oh, not more than a couple of inches. And I could see the hub of a single shoe standing there, in the gap. Perfectly motionless, deceptively motionless.

It could have been a discarded shoe of Carpenter's, dropped to the floor in there and happening to land upright. Even though it was pointing straight toward me, as if to match an unseen pair of eyes somewhere high over it, looking out through an unsuspected rent in the drape. It could have been, but then it woudn't have moved.

As if the direction of my eyes had power to lend it motion. It shifted stealthily back and was gone.

There was only one coherent thought in the fireworks display of panic going off inside my head: "Don't scream. Don't move. Someone in there has been watching you ever since you came in. He may let you go, if you don't let on you've spotted him. Work yourself over toward the door, and then break out fast."

I straightened up. The earring was forgotten, everything else was forgotten. I just wanted out. My feet took a surreptitious step under the cover of the gold dress. Then another. Then a third. Like in that kid's game, where they're not supposed to catch you moving. I was halfway over

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to it now. But even if the maneuvering of my feet couldn't be detected, the position of my body in the room kept changing. That was enough to give me away.

About one more step now. I was just starting to raise my hand unnoticeably in front of me, to tear at the knob and fling myself out, when I heard a click behind me. The sort of a click that a triphammer makes when it goes back. My eyes went around in spite of myself. The drape was out of the way and a man had taken its place now. He was holding a gun at about belt-buckle level.

Even if I hadn't met him across a gun — and across a man he'd already killed — the mere sight of him would have thrown a jolt into me. His expression was the epitome of viciousness. You didn't have to wonder if he'd shoot, you only had to wonder when he would. His face was a mirror: it showed me my own imminent death about to take place. He hadn't had to step out and show himself, he could have let me get away without seeing who he was. The mere fact that he had stepped out, showed I wasn't going to be let get away alive.

Suddenly he made a move and I thought for a minute the bullet had found me. But he'd only hitched his head at me, ordering me to come closer.

I couldn't; my feet wouldn't have done it even if I'd wanted them to. "No, don't," I moaned sickly.

"You're not getting out of here to pin this on me," he slurred. His lips parted and white showed through. But it wasn't a grin, it was just a baring of teeth. "I want the dough he was coming into tonight, see? I got a line on that, never mind how. Now come on, where is it?"

"I have — " I panted. I couldn't go ahead. I pointed to the still form lying between us on the floor.

Did you ever hear a hungry hyena howl against the moon? That was the inflection of his voice. "Come a-a-a-ahn, what'd you do with it?" Then his jaws snapped shut — still like a hyena's on a hunk of food. "All right, I don't have to ask for it. I can just reach for it!" But he didn't mean with his fingers, he meant with a bullet. "You've seen me up here now. That's your tough luck." And he said again what he had in the beginning: "You're not pinning this on me."

The gun twitched warningly, getting ready to recoil against the flat hollow of his indrawn stomach, and this was my last minute.

Then instead of going *bam!* it went *gra-a-aack!* Like those little flat paddles on sticks that kids swing around to make noise with. And instead of coming from in front of him, it came from behind him, upon the wall of the bed-alcove somewhere. My knees dipped to let me down, and then stiffened and went on holding me up some more.

It startled the two of us alike. But I was able to recover quicker, because I knew instantly what it was, and he didn't. It threw him for a complete loss. It was one of those sounds that

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are so indefinite as to cause, and yet it was so close by, so harshly menacing. It was simply that taxidriver downstairs reminding me my ten minutes were up.

He swung first to one side, then to the other, then all the way around, half-crouched, and the gun went off me completely. I pulled at the doorknob, whisked out, and went down the stairs like a gold streak.

He came out after me just as I reached the first turn. There was a window there and it was open a little both at the top and bottom, in order to ventilate the stairs and halls during the night. He shot down the stairs at me, on a descending line of fire, just as I flashed around the turn and got out of it. It didn't hit me, but it should have hit the window and shattered it or it should have hit the plaster of the wall and ploughed into it. It didn't hit anywhere.

Later, long afterwards, it came back to me that it must have, through some freak of downward slanting, neatly gone out through that slender inches-wide lower opening without hitting anything. I didn't think of that then. I didn't think of anything then except getting down the rest of those stairs and out to the street.

He didn't fire after me a second time. He couldn't aim at me from where he was any more. The underside of the stairs over me protected me now. His only chance of hitting me would have been to run down after me and overtake me on the same section of stairs. He still could have done that if he'd tried. Any man is quicker than any woman, particularly a woman in rumba-clogs. But he was afraid of whoever it was that he imagined to be coming up from below, and he was afraid of rousing the house.

I heard his feet go scuffling up the other way, higher still, toward the roof.

The entryway was empty when I got down to it. The hackman must have gone right back to his machine after dutifully giving me the summons I'd asked for. He'd even missed hearing the shot. I could tell that by the cheerful matter-of-factness of his opening remark when I streaked out and burrowed into the back of his machine. "Well, I sure brought you down fast, didn't I, lady?" he asked.

"T-take me back uptown," I said.

The guardian milk-bottle was still standing there by our door when I got out my latchkey for the second time that night.

I let myself in and crept down the hall toward the bedroom. I opened the door and stopped short with my hand on the light-switch. Jimmy had come back, and was in there ahead of me, asleep already. I could hear the soft purr of his snoring in the darkness. He evidently hadn't been surprised by my continued absence. He must have thought I was still at the night club with the Perrys. His breathing was so rhythmic, so regular, it almost sounded studied.

I crawled into my own bed in the dark and just lay there. I hadn't got

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the earring back. That was almost a minor matter by now. I kept seeing that face before me, viciously contorted, mirroring death to come. As sure as anything he was going to track me down, find me, and kill me. My life was forfeit to a murderer's self-preservation. I was the only one who knew he had been up there. I was the only one who knew who had killed Carpenter. He had to get rid of me; his own safety demanded that.

Somewhere, sometime, when I least expected it, death was going to strike out at me. I was on borrowed time.

He would surely get me, unless — I got him first.

The lieutenant's name was Weill, I think. I wasn't sure. I wasn't sure of anything, only that I was striking first, protecting my own life in the only way I knew how.

"I am asking that this interview be treated in strictest confidence."

He looked at me patronizingly; I suppose he thought I was going to accuse someone of poisoning someone else's pet pekinese. "You can rely on us."

"I am here to offer you a proposition. I am in a position to give you information which I think you will find not only timely but exceedingly helpful. In return for this, you must not use my name in any shape, form or manner. It means the destruction of my happiness if you do, and I won't risk it. Who I am, who told you this, must not appear on any of your documents or reports or files."

He was still very condescending. "That's a tall order. Are you sure it's something we'd be interested in?"

"You're a lieutenant of the Homicide Squad? I'm very sure, lieutenant."

He gave me a more alert look. "Very well, I accept your terms."

"*You* do. Yes, but how do I know it won't pass beyond your control? It's a matter that you will have to take others into your confidence about."

"Nothing passes beyond my control in this division, if I don't care to have it do so. If, as you say, others have to be taken into my confidence, I can either pledge them, as you are pledging me, or keep you altogether anonymous, as 'Mrs. X.' or 'an unknown woman.' Does that satisfy you? I give you my word as a police officer."

I wasn't altogether sure of that, I didn't know enough about them. "I also want your word of honor as a man."

He eyed me with increased respect. "That," he admitted, "is a whole lot more dependable. I give you both."

I didn't hold back anything, didn't try to cover myself in any way. I told him about the letters, about Carpenter's contacting me, about my first visit there and the payment of the ten thousand cash. ". . . I also took a gun, to make sure the situation wouldn't pass beyond my control. Here it is here. You can examine it if you want to make sure it wasn't I who did it." I passed it to him.

He weighed it in his hand, smiled a little. "I don't think it'll be necessary

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to do that. The slug of a forty-five was taken out of Carpenter's body. This would be the grandson of a forty-five."

I went into the second part of my story, the really pertinent part. If I hadn't known it was that already, the change in his attitude would have told me. He forgot his rôle of putting a feather-brained society woman at ease, became a police-lieutenant with just an important witness before him. "You'd know this man if you saw him again?" he said sharply.

"All night I saw his face before me."

"You say he held a gun trained on you, before this interruption saved your life. Did you get a good look at it?"

"Quite good." I shuddered.

"Have you a good eye for proportions, for taking in measurements at a glance?"

"Fairly."

He opened a desk-drawer, took out a revolver. "This weapon is empty, so don't be nervous. Of course, you were frightened, so maybe it's not fair, but — This is a forty-five here. I am going to hold it just about as you say he held it. Now. Is it the same size as the one he held?"

"No, his seemed heavier, larger."

"But this is a forty-five. Look at it again. Now what do you say?"

I cocked my head. "No. I may be mistaken, but somehow the one he held seemed to be a larger, heavier gun."

He replaced it, looked around in the drawer, finally took out another. "How about this one, then? This is far bigger than a forty-five. This is as big as they come."

I nodded my head affirmatively without a moment's hesitation. "Yes. That's the same size as the one he held."

He put it back in the drawer. "You're a reliable witness. The first gun was a thirty-eight. The *second* was the forty-five." He got up. "I am going to ask you to try and pick him out for us."

They were all so villainous looking. And yet none of them could approach him in viciousness. Maybe that was because I'd seen him in the flesh, in full dimension, and not just flat on paper, in black and white. There were two photos of each one, in profile and fullface. I ignored the profiles, concentrated on the fullfaces. That was the way he'd been turned toward me during those few awful moments up there.

Suddenly I got up from the chair. I put my forefinger on the photograph, but not for his benefit yet, simply for my own, to hang onto it. I closed my eyes and held them that way for a moment. Then when I had his face good and clear, burning clear, I opened them. I let them travel down the line of my arm, all the way down to the end of my finger, and the face on the police photograph blended into the one glowing in my mind, without any changes of outline.

Then I turned to Weill. "This is the face of the man I saw up there," I said.

He said again what he'd said before, up in his office. "You're a good, de-

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pendable witness. I liked the way you did that just then." He bent forward above my shoulder and read from the data accompanying the photos. "That's 'Sonny-Boy' Nelson. He's already wanted for murder, three times over. We've wanted him for a long time."

Back in his office, he finally noticed the change that had come over me since that last remark of his. "What is it, Mrs. Shaw? You seem troubled."

I gestured shakily. "Well, after all, lieutenant, why did I come here? To assure my own safety, to protect my life. This man saw me up there, just as I saw him. He knows I'm the only one who knows he was there. He's going to try to kill me. He's surely going to try, so that I won't be able to tell that to anyone.

"Now if he's already been wanted for three murders, and you haven't gotten him so far, my identification makes no difference; you'll simply want him for four murders now, but that doesn't mean you'll get him any quicker than before. And meanwhile, what's to become of me? I'll be living in danger from one minute to the next."

"I'll detail someone to — "

I quickly warded that off with a gesture.

"No, you can't. How could such a thing escape Jim — my husband's notice? He's bound to ask questions, wonder what it's all about. The whole thing would be bound to come out in the end. And that's the very thing I tried to avoid by coming here to you unasked, entirely of my own accord."

He stared at me incredulously. "You mean, given a choice between risking your life in a very real sense, and having your husband learn of your *innocent* involvement in this whole affair, you'd rather take chances on your life?"

"Much rather," I told him very decisively.

I had been afraid *not* to pay the ten thousand. Now, because I had paid it, I was afraid to have it come out I had. I was afraid he would think there must have been something to cover up after all, if I had been so anxious and willing to pay it.

"You're an unusual person," Weill let me know.

"No, I'm not. Happiness is a soap-bubble. Once it's been pricked, just try and get it back together again! This Sonny-Boy Nelson's bullets can miss me. But my bubble can never be repaired again, once it's burst. Even if it means just a stray thought passing through my husband's mind five years from now — 'Where there's smoke there's fire' — I won't take that chance, I won't risk it. Nothing else in life matters to me." I got up and went toward the door.

Then I saw that he had more to say, so I stopped and looked back.

"Well, if you're willing to take the risk that you are, spread out thin, over days and weeks, how about taking an even greater risk, but all at one time? Getting it over with then and there?"

I answered that by coming away from the door, returning to his desk, and reseating myself acquiescently.

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"You said, a little while ago, that your coming here had done no good; that we'd only want him for one additional murder now but still without knowing where to find him. But you're mistaken. If you're willing to cooperate, run the risk that I just spoke of, we *will* know where to find him. Which is more than we ever knew before."

I saw what he meant. I shook a little, but I lit a cigarette. The cigarette of cooperation.

"Tell me," he said, "are there any out-of-the-way places you're in the habit of going to by yourself, entirely unaccompanied by your husband or friends or anyone else? I mean, without departing from your normal routine or habits of life?"

I thought for a moment. "Yes," I said, "there are."

Jimmy didn't mind my doing private charity work, going around to a few handpicked cases I happened to know of and doing what I could for them, but he didn't like the parts of town it took me into at times. Above all, he didn't like the idea of my going alone into some of those places. He'd warned me again and again to take someone with me.

I made the rounds only about once a month, anyway. I wasn't a professional welfare worker. I never had more than half a dozen at a time on my list, and they were all people that for one reason or another fell outside the scope of the regular relief agencies. Borderline cases that would have been left in the lurch if it weren't for me.

Like this old Mrs. Scalento, living alone and too proud to apply to the city for help. She wouldn't have been eligible anyway; she could make enough to support herself when she was well. But right now she was laid up with arthritis or something, and needed tiding over. That was where I came in.

I got out of the cab outside the tunnel-like black entrance of the rookery she lived in. They never had any lights on the stairs there, but I'd brought a little pocket-flash along in my bag for just that purpose. This was the very sort of place Jimmy had specifically warned me not to venture into alone, particularly at night, but I'd got newer instructions since — from somebody else.

I groped my way down the long Stygian bore that led back to where I knew the stairs to be — from my memory of past visits alone. When I'd found the bottom one with my foot, and the dim light coming in from the street behind me would have failed to penetrate any deeper, I stopped for a moment. I reached into my bag for the pocket-flash, to light me the rest of the way up.

Did you ever have a feeling of someone being near you, without seeing anything, without hearing anything move? Animals have that faculty of detection, I know, but that's through their sense of scent. Scent wasn't involved in this. Just some sort of a pulsing that told of another presence, reached me. To one side of the bat-

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tered staircase, or perhaps around behind it.

I got the flash out and it shot a little white pill of light up the stairs in front of me before I'd even realized I'd nudged the little control-lever on. It must have been obvious which direction I was going to turn it in next, by the way it shook and slopped around in my hand.

The voice was so quiet. So reassuringly quiet. It seemed to come from right beside me, my very elbow almost. "Don't turn the light this way, Mrs. Shaw."

Mrs. Shaw. So then I knew what it was.

"Weill's man. Don't be frightened, Mrs. Shaw. We're covering every one of these places you've showed up at tonight. Just act as you would at any other time."

I went on up the stairs, after I'd gotten my breath back and my heartbeat had slowed a little, thinking resentfully: "The fool! The Other One himself couldn't have frightened me any worse!"

That was what *I* thought.

I knocked when I got up to her door, and then let myself in without further ado. I had to; the old lady didn't have the use of her legs.

She was sitting there propped up in bed, the way I usually found her. She didn't seem glad to see me. Her face always lit up as though I were a visiting angel when I came in, and she'd start to bless me in Italian. Tonight she just stared at me with an intentness that almost seemed to have hostility in it. She didn't utter a word of greeting, held my gaze steadily.

She had just this one large barren room, and then a black hole of a kitchen without any window at all, leading off from it. I closed the door after me. "Well, how are we tonight?" I greeted her.

She gave an impatient swerve of her head away from me, almost as though she resented my coming in on her, as though I were unwelcome. I pretended not to notice the unmistakable surliness — not to mention ingratitude — of the reception I was getting.

The air of the room was stagnant, murky; none of these people were great believers in ventilation. "Don't you think it would be a good idea to let a little fresh air in here?" I suggested. I crossed to the window and raised it slightly from the bottom. She glared at me.

"How's your plant getting along?" I asked her, crouching slightly to peer out at it. I'd sent her over a potted geranium, to cheer her up. She kept it out there on the window-ledge.

A look of almost ferocious vindictiveness passed over her face, as I straightened up and turned away. "You no got to worry about it; iss all ri'," she let me know in husky defiance. It was the first remark she'd uttered since I came in. She was kneading her fingers palsiedly. Or maybe she was trying to convey something with them, I don't know.

I drew out my usual bedside chair and sat down by her. She wouldn't turn to look at me, kept staring

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stubbornly straight ahead, as though I were not there at all.

I tried to win her over. "Have you been using that electric heater? Does it take any of the stiffness out, make you feel any better?"

She said gruffly, "Lotsa bett'."

She had folded her arms across her chest now in a sort of stubborn sulkiness, and she kept jabbing one hand surreptitiously out from underneath the opposite arm. Not toward me, more — toward the door.

I said finally, in a low confidential voice: "What're you trying to tell me?"

Her face flashed around toward me. She bared her almost toothless mouth in a grin that held frightened supplication in it. "I no tella you noth'. What you hear me say? Do I tella you anything?"

"I'll do my own telling," the new voice said.

Someone had come out of the kitchen and was standing right behind my chair. Its back had been turned that way.

I rocketed to my feet, chest going up and down like a bellows. A hand slipped around from behind me and riveted itself to my wrist, steely and implacable. The chair slashed over, discarded.

"Remember me?" was all he said.

The old lady, as if released from a spell, began to jabber now that it was too late: "*Signora!* This man he come here early tonight, he say he know you make visit every time on firsta month, he'ssa going to wait for you. I not can make him go 'way, I no can get up from bed and call policeman. He say if I tella you he'ss in there he shoot me. All time he have gun point at me, I no can't spik — "

He chopped the gun-butt around horizontally at her forehead, without letting go of me, and she flopped back stunned on the pillow. I never saw anything more brutal in my life.

He gave it a little dextrous flip, then, that brought his grip back to the heft. "Now let's take up where we left off the other night, you and me."

I saw he was going to let me have the bullet then and there. He swung me around toward him by my arm, and brought the gun up, to contact-point against my side. He wasn't taking any chances this time.

He'd maneuvered me out away from the bed — I suppose so there'd be room enough for me to fall. But that had unnoticeably changed our respective positions now. He was between me and the door. His back was to it, and I was toward it. But I couldn't see it, or anything else, just then. I never even heard it open. I only heard the terminal thud it made at the other end of its arc, when it brought up flat against the wall. And I heard the harsh order that topped the thud.

"Drop that gun, Nelson, you're covered three ways!"

There was an awful moment of suspended motion, when nothing seemed to happen. Then the gun loosened, skidded down my side and hit the floor.

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A man's head and shoulders showed up, one at each side of him, and there was a third one overlapping a little behind him. His two sleeves tightened up, as if drawn from behind, and so did the neck of his coat-collar. The front buttons pulled tight, to nearly up under his chin.

He'd even forgotten to let go of my wrist, he was still holding it until after they clicked the handcuff on his own.

They said to me, "You must have seen him the minute you got in, to tip us off so quickly — "

"No, I didn't. I didn't see him until just a minute ago, right before you broke in."

"Then how did you manage to — ?"

"I knew he was here the minute I stepped through the door. I could tell by the frozen expression of her face and eyes she was under some kind of restraint or compulsion. And the air was close with stale cigarette-smoke. He'd smoked one or two too many, back there, while he was waiting for me to show up. I knew she never used them herself. But it was too late to back out through the door again, once I'd shown myself; he would have shot me down from where he was. So I stepped over to the window under the excuse of getting some air into the room, and gave that potted plant she kept on it a soundless little nudge off into space."

The man in charge said, "Hold him up here for a couple of minutes, give Mrs. X. a chance to make her getaway from the neighborhood first, before anyone spots her. You see that she gets home safely, Dillon."

"Will she be all right?" I asked.

"She'll be all right, we'll look after her."

"Poor Mrs. Scalento," I said, going down the stairs with the man delegated to accompany me, "I'll have to buy her another plant."

The formal identification was brief, and, as far as I was concerned, of about the same degree of comfort as the extraction of a live tooth without anesthesia. Why they had to have it I don't know, since, according to my bargain with Weill, my own identity was to remain unrevealed. It took place in Weill's office, with a heavy guard at the door, to keep pryers — even inter-departmental pryers — at a distance.

"Bring him in."

I didn't raise my eyes from the floor until the scuff of unwilling shoe-leather dragged against its will had stopped short.

"Mrs. X. Is this the man you saw in the living-quarters of one John Carpenter, —— East —— th, at about four-thirty A.M. on the fifteenth day of April?"

My voice rang out like a bell. "That is the same man."

"Did he have a weapon in his hand?"

"He had a weapon in his hand."

"Stand up, please, and repeat that under oath."

I stood up. They thrust a Bible toward me and I placed my right hand on it as if we had been in a courtroom.

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I repeated after the man swearing me in: " . . . the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." Then I said: "I solemnly swear that I saw this man, with a weapon in his hand, in the living-quarters of John Carpenter, —— East —— th Street, at about four-thirty A.M., April 15th."

Nelson's fatigue-cracked voice shattered the brief silence. "You can't pin this on me! I didn't do it, d'ya hear, I didn't do it!"

"No, and you didn't kill Little Patsy O'Connor either, did you? Or Schindel? Or Duke Biddermen, in a car right outside his own front door? Take him out!"

"She's framing me! She done it herself, and then she made a deal with you, to switch it to me!"

They dragged him out, still mouthing imprecations. The closing of the door toned them down, but you could still hear them dying away along the corridor outside.

Weill turned back to me and let his fingertips touch my gloved hand reassuringly for a moment, maybe because he saw that it was vibrating slightly, as an after-effect of the scene of violence that had just taken place. "That's all. That finishes your participation in the affair. You just go home and forget about it."

I could carry out the first part of the injunction all right; I had my doubts about the second.

"But you had a stenographic transcription made of my identification of him just now, I noticed," I faltered uneasily.

"Yes, and I'm also having depositions made out to be signed by those two witnesses I had in the room, regarding what took place here. In other words I'm preparing affidavits of *your* affidavit, so that it doesn't have to hang suspended in midair. But that needn't alarm you. I have the okay of the D. A.'s office on getting around it in this way in your case."

"But in the courtroom, won't he,— won't his lawyer, demand that you produce me, for cross-examination?"

"Let him. The D. A.'s office is taking that into account, in preparing its procedure. I'm prepared to take the stand in your place, as your proxy, if necessary. And police-lieutenant or not, I don't think I'd make the kind of a witness whose testimony is to be lightly disregarded."

He seemed to have taken care of every contingency; I felt a whole lot better.

He shook my hand. "I keep my bargains. You're out of it to stay. All knowledge of you ends with us."

He said to the detective standing outside the door, "Take this lady to the special departmental car you'll find waiting for her outside. Go along in it with her and keep everyone at a distance. Take her to the -th Street side-entrance of the Kay Department Store."

That was the biggest one in the city. I went in, walked through it on the bias without stopping to buy anything, got into a taxi a moment later at the main entrance, and had myself driven home.

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The whole town had been talking about it for several weeks past, so I wasn't surprised when it finally penetrated even to Jimmy's insulated consciousness. I was only surprised that it hadn't long before then. But the news of the world, for Jimmy, was only the quotations on a tickertape.

Carpenter's metier of preying on respectable and socially-prominent women, which had been uncovered during the course of it, and which the defense was as willing (but for different reasons) to play up as the prosecution, was what gave it the fillip of being above just another underworld killing, I suppose. Anyway, half of the men around town kept whispering that it was the next guy's wife, and the other half looked kind of thoughtful, as though they were doing some mental checking-up.

He'd been reading about it one night — that was toward the end, after it had been going on for several weeks — and he started discussing it with me.

I twiddled my thimble-sized coffee-cup around disinterestedly, looked down at it. "Do you think there really is such a woman?" I asked idly. "Or are he and his lawyer just making it up, howling for her to try to distract attention from his own guilt?"

He grimaced undecidedly, didn't answer right away. But Jimmy is not likely to be without opinions for long; that's why he is as successful as he is. It came on slowly; I could almost see it forming before my very eyes. First he just chewed his lip in cogitation. Then he nodded abstractedly. Then he gave it words. "Yes. I dunno why, but — I have a feeling they're telling the truth, as mealy-mouthed as they are. I wouldn't be surprised if there *was* some woman up there that same night. The prosecution doesn't deny it, I notice; they just clam up each time. That's what makes me half-inclined to believe — "

They hadn't made use of any of the back-stops Weill had prepared, up to this point, so there was still room for legitimate doubt: the affidavits on *my* affidavit; nor had Weill taken the stand to pinch-hit for me. Maybe they were saving them for a bang-up finish, or maybe they weren't going to ring them in at all, had found they didn't really need them. My chief contribution had been to point out Sonny-Boy Nelson to them, and help them trap him, and that could be safely left out of it without damaging their case any. Otherwise what could I add? Only circumstantial strengthening to what was already an overwhelmingly strong circumstantial case. They'd even found someone who had seen him — Nelson — run out of the house next door, gun still unsheathed, and the door of Carpenter's apartment and the two roof-doors had been found yawning wide open.

But there was one thing I couldn't get straight in my own mind. I mentioned it aloud to him — although very carefully. "But why do *they* — Nelson and his lawyer — keep harping on this woman? What do *they* expect to get out of that? I should

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think it would be the other way around, that it would harm them rather than help them to have her —"

He shrugged. "Evidently they've figured out some way in which they think she can help them. They must have something up their sleeves. I wouldn't know. I can't figure out what goes on in the crooked minds of shady lawyers and their clients." He pitched the paper disgustedly aside, as though the subject didn't interest him any more. He delivered himself of a concluding postscript.

"Anyway, if there is such a woman — and most likely there is — she's a fool. She should have gone to her own husband, whoever she is, and taken him into her confidence, before she got in that deep."

How easy to say, I thought poignantly. "Maybe she was afraid to," I mentioned. "Afraid he wouldn't believe her or would misunderstand —"

He gave me a scornful look, as he got up, as though he thought I were a fool myself, to make a remark like that. "The right kind of a husband," he said, sauntering out to the next room, "understands everything, forgives everything. He takes care of things for her. And above all, he doesn't speak of it."

Ah yes, I thought, in theory, on paper, how well that works out. But in real life, just try it and see what cain it would raise!

He only spoke of it once again, after that. "I see he got the Chair."

"Who?" I asked. I'd known since nine that morning, when the first paper came into the house.

"That fellow, what's his name, Baby-Face — No, Sonny-Boy, Nelson."

"He did?" I said, in polite echo.

He pretended to snap the light-switch of my room, to hurry me up.

It put me in mind, somehow, of a switch being thrown in a death-chamber.

The maid came in and said, "There's a man at the door to see you, madam."

Something about it frightened me even before I knew of anything to be frightened about. I started up from the chair. "Who is he? What does he want?"

I saw her staring at me curiously, as if wondering what made me so jittery about such a trivial announcement. I tried to cover it up with a pass of my hand.

"Send him in here."

I knew him by sight, right away. I couldn't help wondering, though, how I'd known it was going to be something like this ahead of time. I went over and closed the door. He had sense enough to wait until I had.

"I'm from Weill's office — "

I didn't let him get any further. "He shouldn't have sent you over here like this! I thought he said I was through! What does he want now?"

"Sonny-Boy Nelson is being taken up to the Death House on the three o'clock train. He's pleading for a last chance to talk to you before he goes — "

"Then even *he* knows who I am! Is

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that how Weill keeps his bargains?"

"No, he doesn't know your name or anything like that. He just knows that you saw him up there, and it was through you we captured him."

"Can I reach Weill at his office? Get him for me."

"Yes ma'am. The only reason he sent me over instead of calling you himself is he thought somebody else might intercept or overhear the call — here he is, now."

"Weill? What about this?" I said crisply.

"No, don't go near him, Mrs. X. There's nothing to be gained by it. You're not under any obligation to him."

"Well, then why did you send someone over here to let me know about it?"

"Simply to give you your choice in the matter, to let you know he's been asking for you. But you're free to do as you please about it. If you want my opinion, there's no need for you to see him any further. He's been tried and sentenced. There's nothing you can do for him."

"But he evidently thinks there is, or he wouldn't be asking for me. And if I refuse, I suppose he'll go up there cursing me — "

"Well, let him. They all curse someone, and never the right one — themselves. Put him out of your mind. No use being sensitive about these matters."

But he was used to dealing in them; I wasn't.

"Would there be any risk?"

"Of identification? No, none whatever. I'll see to that personally. But as I said before, if you want my honest opinion, I don't see any necessity — "

I went anyway. Maybe because I'm a woman. Curiosity, you know. I mean, I wanted to hear what he wanted. I had to, for my own satisfaction and peace of mind. Remember, I wasn't thirsting for his blood. My purpose in going to the police in the first place hadn't been to secure his death. It had been to secure my own life. That had been accomplished from the moment he had been apprehended; he didn't have to be executed to advance my safety any further than it was already.

I didn't think there was anything I could do for him. Weill didn't. But he did. Why shouldn't I at least hear what he thought it was?

I wore such a heavy veil I could hardly see through it myself. Not for Nelson's own sake, he'd already seen my face as plainly as anyone could that night up at Carpenter's, but in order to avoid all risk going and coming from the place. Weill's man went with me as far as the prison building; Weill took over there himself and escorted me into the cell. They didn't keep me outside at the mesh-barrier through which prisoners usually communicate with friends and relatives. They took me right into the cell itself, so my presence would be less likely to attract attention.

He reared up hopefully. He looked — shadowed already, by what was to come. I guess they do. I'd never seen

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one before.

He said, "How do I know if she's the right one?"

I raised the veil and left it up.

"Yeah," he said, nodding grimly. "Yeah." He turned to Weill. "Why can't Scalenza be here? He can put it better than I can."

Weill reached to take me by the arm. "No, no lawyers or anybody else. Say what you want and be quick about it, or she leaves with me right now."

He looked at me, this time. "I want to see you alone."

"He thinks I've got you intimidated," Weill said to me caustically. He looked at me for the answer.

"All right," I said quietly.

"I'll be right outside here," he promised, "so don't be worried." He stepped out.

It's hard, I suppose, to make a plea, when your whole life has to go into it. "Look," he began awkwardly, "I dunno who you are, but you can save me. You're the only one."

"*I* can? Why do you call on me? I never said you killed Carpenter. I only said I'd seen you up there."

"I know, I know. But listen to me, only listen to me, will you? Carpenter was killed with a slug from a .45, remember they brought that out at my trail?" He called it that, "trail," the poor God-forsaken devil.

"I wasn't at your trial."

He rushed on without stopping to listen. "I got a .45, yes. They caught me with one on me. But they never proved that the slug they dug out of him was fired from my gun!"

"The papers said they couldn't, from what I recall. That it had gone through, or at least into, a thin cigarette-case in Carpenter's pocket. That it wasn't the bullet that had pierced his heart, actually, but a fragment of the case, driven into it *by* the bullet. That the bullet itself had been flattened out, the markings had been destroyed by the case, so that they couldn't check it by — whatever they call that scientific method of theirs, ballistics or something. Again, why do you call on me? *I* didn't say you fired at him — "

"No, but you *didn't* say I fired at you. And that's what can save me, that's my only chance!"

"I don't under — "

He didn't actually reach out and shake me, but he made the motions with his hands. "Don't you see? Don't you see? I didn't have a chance to use my gun at all when they caught up with me; they got me without firing a shot. It was still packed the way it was that night up at Carpenter's when they took it from me. Only one bullet out of it, five still in it. That proves I only fired one shot that night. That shot at you on the stairs. I only thought of that now, after it was too late. If you'll only *tell* them that I fired after you out on the stairs, with only one bullet gone that'll prove it couldn't have been my shot that went into Carpenter! If you'll only *tell* them!"

"Whether she does or doesn't, that's not worth a tinker's dam!" Weill's

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voice suddenly grated in at us from outside the cell-opening. He must have been standing there a little to one side taking in the whole conversation. He came in again, motioned curtly to me. "Go home, Mrs. X. Go home and forget the whole business! He could have reloaded that gun sixty times over between the time Carpenter was killed and the time we got him!"

"But the people in the building only heard the one shot!" Nelson shrilled. "They said so, all of them —"

"Because only one was fired on the outside, where they could hear it; the other one was fired inside Carpenter's flat, where they couldn't. That's no good to you at all!" He took me by the arm, politely but authoritatively. "Come on, Mrs. X. Don't waste any more of your time in here. What a nerve this bird has! He tried to kill *you* with that very shot he's speaking of; now he's trying to turn that very shot around and use it to his advantage with your help!"

Back in his office he said to me, "So he got under your skin with that, didn't he? I can tell that by looking at you. That's what he wanted to do."

"But he did fire at me on the stairs," I murmured.

"Then why didn't we come across the bullet imbedded somewhere along them?"

"It may have gone out through the slit of an open window. I passed one, I remem — "

He fanned a hand at me, as if the whole suggestion were ridiculous. "Did you ever deny that he fired at you?"

"No."

"Were you ever even given a chance to *say* whether or not he had?"

"No."

"Then go home and forget about it. I wouldn't let you destroy your home for that rat if I could. His dirty hide's been quadruply forfeited to the State. The whole thing's splitting hairs, in a way, isn't it? They can't execute him, up there where he's going, more than once for one murder. We already had him down on the books for three others.

"If he'd happened to be acquitted of this particular one he was tried for just now, d'you suppose that would have meant he would have been let go? Not on your life! He would have simply been tried over again for one of the others, and sentenced to death anyway."

The execution-notice was tiny, and tucked away so far back within the paper you would have missed it a dozen times over unless you happened to be specifically looking for it.

Well, he was gone now. What was the good of wondering *could* I have saved him? Weill had said he wouldn't have let me even if I could. And he hadn't been thinking entirely of my own personal welfare, either. The police want their victories, too. They work hard for them; they're only human. Justice is not an exact science, it's only relative. It's more than just a matter of subtracting the total number of bullets found left in a gun, and then calling that innocence if there's

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one over. It's: Was there murder in the heart of the man who held that gun? Had he murdered before? Did he try to murder once more, even when his bullet missed me and went out through an open window?

And I couldn't have saved him, I saw that now. My evidence wouldn't have been enough to get him off. On the contrary, it might have had quite the reverse effect: even added strength to the case against him. For if he had been willing to shoot me down to keep it from being known that he had been there, didn't that argue that he had far more than just trespassing to cover up? That he had a just-previous murder to cover up, in fact?

I would only have blackened my whole future, and he still would have been electrocuted tonight.

I moved my arm, resting on the dresser-top, and his death went where his life had gone: into the waste-basket.

I went ahead dressing for the evening.

No, no earrings. I didn't have to be told that there was only one earring left. My heart knew that by heart. I picked it up, and there was something the matter with my eyes. There was still another one lying in the box!

It brought on an attack of vertigo, or something very close to it. I had to stiff-arm myself against the edge of the dresser and just hang on, until it had passed.

Jimmy was dressed, waiting for me outside in the other room. I came out to him, box and all; very white. Like a statue.

"Who put this left earring back? I thought I'd lost it."

He looked at it puzzedly himself for a moment. Then I saw his face clear. "Oh, I remember now. Why, I put it back myself. You were out at the time."

I swallowed. "I haven't opened the case since that night I was out with the Perrys."

I could see him trying to think back. "Well, that must have been the time. Whatever night it was, I remember I'd stayed up all night doing my income-tax. Then I went out to stretch my legs, get a little fresh air, and just as I got back I ran into the milkman, he was standing there by our door, all excited about something. He came running to me.

"'Mr. Shaw, look what I just found inside the empty bottle at your door. There was a note curled up in the neck of it, funnel-shaped, you know, and that caught it and held it.'

"Then when I went to our room with it, I saw that you hadn't come back yet, you were still out. So I put it back in the box and went to sleep. You must have lost it right on your way out, as you left the door."

He stopped and glanced at me. "You've got the funniest look on your face. What're you thinking about?"

"Oh, nothing." I turned and went to get my wrap. "I was just thinking," I added over my shoulder, "how funny life is. Whatever this play is about that we're going to see tonight, it can't match real life for its thrills, its

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ups and downs, its crazy, unbelievable quirks."

I was lying awake later thinking about it; living the whole thing through all over again. I remembered now how I'd had to shake my key, trying to get it in the door, the first time I'd come back. That was what had loosened it, made it drop off. And I remembered now, I'd even heard the funny little plink of glass it had made going in the bottle-mouth. Only at the time I thought it was the tip of my shoe that had grazed it. If I'd only taken the trouble to bend down and look!

All that agony, all that suspense, all that fear, for nothing. I hadn't needed to go back to Carpenter's a second time!

Well, that milkman was an honest man, that was about the only consolation I could derive from the whole thing. Even if Jimmy had given him something at the time he found the earring, he deserved a little extra bonus.

I looked across the room and I saw by the radium clock-dial that the night was nearly gone, and it was about his usual time for covering his route and making a delivery at the door. On an impulse I got up, put something over me, took two ten-dollar bills out of the bureau, and went out to our front door.

I was just in time.

"Bill, here's something for you, for finding that earring of mine, that time." I tried to tuck it into his hand. He wouldn't open it.

"What earring, Mrs. Shaw?"

"You know, the one that had dropped into the empty milk-bottle out here at the door. My diamond earring, with an emerald in the middle."

He was an honest man, all right. "No ma'm, I never found any diamond earring of yours: I never found any diamond earring of *anybody's*. I'd sure remember it if I had."

I managed to utter, "Good night, Bill," and I closed the door rather quickly.

The distance from there to our bedroom wasn't so great. It took me a long time to cover it, though.

I stood looking at Jimmy. His hand was sticking out over the edge of the mattress, the way a person's sometimes does when he is asleep. I reached down and put my own over it and gently clasped it, in a sort of wordless pact, but not strongly enough to disturb him.

Something that he'd once said came back to me. "The right kind of a husband understands everything, forgives everything. He takes care of things for her. *And above all, he doesn't speak of it.*"

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The second labor of Hercules was to destroy a monster with nine heads — the Hydra of Lernea. But Hercules discovered that every time one of the nine heads was cut off, two heads grew in its place. The Herculean task, therefore, was to find the true source, to reach the first head, and by decapitating that original noggin, exterminate the mythological menace.

Now, as you know, Agatha Christie visioned her Hercule Poirot as a sort of modern Hercules. She permitted the man of the little grey cells to accept only twelve more cases before retiring — only those rare, difficult, and unusual cases which would truly test his herculean powers and fittingly comprise his Modern Labors. What, then, is the twentieth-century equivalent of the Hydra of Lernea? What, in this day and age, is so self-renewing that when you annihilate part of it, twice as much rises Phoenix-like in its stead?

Miss Christie found an ingenious and imaginative answer to the riddle. Surely malicious gossip, unfounded and unfriendly rumor, is the modern many-headed monster. As Poirot says, there is nothing so intangible, so difficult to pin down, as the source — the original Hydra-head — of anonymous and scandalous tittle-tattle. Crop off one source of rumor and before you turn around, two more sources have sprung into being. So, St. Detective sets out to slay the Dragon — and mythological murder marches on!

The Labors of Hercules:

The Hydra of Lernea, or

THE CASE OF THE GOSSIPERS

by AGATHA CHRISTIE

HERCULE POIROT looked encouragingly at the man seated opposite him.

Dr. Oldfield was a man of perhaps forty. His fair hair was gray at the temples; his blue eyes worried; his manner hesitant.

"I've come to you, M. Poirot, with rather an odd request. It isn't any good going to the police. They can't do anything. And yet — every day it's getting worse and worse. I — I don't know what to do."

"What is getting worse?"

"The rumors. A little over a year ago, M. Poirot, my wife died. She had been an invalid for some years. Everyone is saying that I killed her — that I poisoned her!"

"Aha! And did you poison her?"

"M. Poirot!"

"Calm yourself," said Hercule Poi-

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rot. "We will take it that you did *not* poison your wife. But your practice, I imagine, is situated in a country district — "

"Yes. Market Loughborough. I have always realized that it was the kind of place where people gossiped a good deal, but I never imagined how much. You have no idea what I have gone through. At first I had no inkling of what was going on. I noticed that people showed a tendency to avoid me, but I put it down to my recent bereavement. Then it became more marked. People pass me on the other side of the street. My practice is falling off. Wherever I go I am conscious of lowered voices, of unfriendly eyes, malicious tongues. I have had one or two letters — vile things. I don't know how to fight this sinister network of lies and suspicion. How can you refute what is never said openly to your face? I am powerless."

Poirot nodded his head. "Yes, rumor is indeed the nine-headed Hydra of Lernea which cannot be exterminated because as fast as one head is cropped off two grow in its place."

"That's just it. There's nothing I can do — *nothing!* And I don't really suppose there is anything you can do either."

"I am not so sure," said Poirot. "Your problem interests me, Dr. Oldfield. I should like to try my hand at destroying the many-headed monster. Tell me a little more about the circumstances which started this malicious gossip. Your wife died, you say, a year ago?"

"Yes. Gastric ulcer."

"Was there an autopsy?"

"No. She had been suffering from gastric trouble over a considerable period."

Poirot nodded. "The symptoms of gastric inflammation and of arsenical poisoning are closely alike — a fact which everybody knows nowadays. . . . Was your wife older or younger than yourself?"

"She was five years older."

"How long had you been married?"

"Fifteen years."

"Did she leave you any property, may I ask?"

"Yes, about thirty thousand pounds."

"Were you and your wife on good terms?"

"Certainly."

"No quarrels? No scenes?"

"Well" — Charles Oldfield hesitated — "my wife was a difficult woman. She was an invalid, very concerned over her health and inclined to be fretful and difficult. There were days when nothing was right."

Poirot nodded. "I know the type. She would complain, possibly, that she was neglected, that her husband was tired of her and would be glad when she was dead."

"You've got it exactly!"

"Did you have a hospital nurse to attend on her? Or a companion?"

"A nurse-companion. A very sensible woman. I really don't think she would talk."

"Sensible, yes — but even the sensible have been given tongues by *le bon Dieu*. I have no doubt that the

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companion talked, that the servants talked, that everyone talked. You have all the materials there for a very enjoyable village scandal. Now I will ask you one thing more. Who is the lady?"

"I don't understand." Oldfield flushed angrily.

Poirot said gently: "I think you do. I am asking you who the lady is with whom your name has been coupled?"

Dr. Oldfield rose. "There is no 'lady in the case,'" he said coldly. "I'm sorry, M. Poirot, to have taken up so much of your time." He went towards the door.

Hercule Poirot said: "I regret it also. Your case interests me. I should have liked to help you. But I cannot do anything unless I am told the whole truth."

"I have told you the truth."

"No . . . "

Dr. Oldfield wheeled. "Why do you insist there is a woman concerned in this?"

"*Mon cher docteur!* Do you not think I know the female mentality? The village gossip — it is based always on the relations of the sexes. If a man poisons his wife in order to travel to the North Pole or to enjoy the peace of a bachelor existence — it would not interest his fellow villagers for a minute! It is because they are convinced that the murder has been committed in order *that the man may marry another woman* that the talk grows and spreads."

"I'm not responsible for what a pack of gossiping busybodies think!"

"Of course not. So you might as well come back, sit down and give me the answer to the question I asked."

Slowly Oldfield resumed his seat. "I suppose it's possible they've been saying things about Miss Moncrieffe. Jean Moncrieffe is my dispenser, a very fine girl."

"How long has she worked for you?"

"For three years."

"Did your wife like her?"

"Er — well, no, not exactly."

"She was jealous?"

"It was absurd!"

Poirot smiled. "The jealousy of wives is proverbial. But I will tell you something. In my experience jealousy, however far-fetched it may seem, is nearly always based on reality. There is a saying that the customer is always right. The same is true of the jealous husband or wife. However little concrete evidence there may be, fundamentally they are always right."

"Nonsense. I've never said anything to Jean that my wife couldn't have overheard."

"Perhaps. Dr. Oldfield, I am going to do my utmost in this case. But I must have from you the most absolute frankness. It is true, is it not, that you had ceased to care for your wife for some time before she died?"

Oldfield was silent for a minute. Then he said: "This business is killing me. I must have hope. Somehow I feel that you will be able to do something for me. I will be frank, M. Poirot. I did not care for my wife. I made her, I think, a good husband, but I was

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never deeply in love with her."

"And this girl, Jean?"

"I — I should have asked her to marry me if it weren't for all this scandal."

Poirot sat back in his chair. "Now at last we have come to the true facts! *Eh bien, Monsieur le docteur*, I will take up your case. But remember this — it is the truth that I shall seek out."

Oldfield said bitterly: "It isn't the truth that's going to hurt me!" He paused. "You know I've contemplated the possibility of an action for slander! If I could pin anyone down to a definite accusation — surely then I should be vindicated. At least, sometimes I think so. . . . At other times I think it would only make things worse — give bigger publicity and have people saying: 'It mayn't have been proved but there's no smoke without fire!'"

He looked at Poirot. "Tell me, honestly, is there *any* way out of this nightmare?"

"That, we shall see," said Poirot.

"We are going into the country, Georges," said Poirot to his valet. "And the purpose of our journey is to destroy a monster with nine heads."

"Really, sir? Something after the style of the Loch Ness Monster?"

"Less tangible than that. I did not refer to a flesh and blood animal, Georges. It would be easier if it were one. There is nothing so intangible, so difficult to pin down, as the source of a rumor."

The morning after Poirot's arrival — he had put up at the local inn — he had his first interview with Jean Moncrieffe. She was tall, with copper hair and steady blue eyes. She had about her a watchful look. She said: "So Dr. Oldfield did go to you. I knew he was thinking about it."

"And you did not approve?"

Her eyes met his. She said coldly: "What can you do?"

Poirot said quietly: "There might be a way of tackling the situation."

"What way? Do you mean to go around to all the whispering old women and say: 'Really, please, you must stop talking like this. It's so bad for poor Dr. Oldfield.' They'd answer you and say: 'Of course, *I* have never believed the story!' That's the worst of the whole thing. They don't say: 'My dear, has it ever occurred to you that perhaps Mrs. Oldfield's death wasn't quite what it seemed?' No, they say: 'My dear, of course, I *don't* believe that story about Dr. Oldfield and his wife. I'm *sure* he wouldn't do such a thing, though it's true that he *did* neglect her just a little perhaps and I don't think, really, it's quite *wise* to have quite so young a girl as a dispenser. Of course I'm not saying for a minute that there was anything *wrong* between them. Oh, no, I'm sure it was *quite* all right. . . .'" She stopped. Her face was flushed.

Poirot said: "You seem to know very well just what is being said. What is your own solution?"

"The best thing for him to do is to sell his practice and start again somewhere else."

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"Don't you think the story might follow him?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "He must risk that."

Poirot was silent for a minute or two. Then he said: "Are you going to marry Dr. Oldfield, Miss Moncrieffe?"

She displayed no surprise at the question. "He hasn't asked me."

"Why not?"

Her blue eyes met his and flickered for a second. "Because I've choked him off."

"Ah, what a blessing to find someone who can be frank."

"I will be as frank as you please. When I realized that people were saying that Charles had got rid of his wife in order to marry me, it seemed to me that if we *did* marry it would just put the lid on things. I hoped that if there appeared to be no question of marriage between us, the silly scandal might die down. But it hasn't."

"Surely that is a little odd?"

Jean said bitterly: "They haven't got much to amuse them down here."

"Do you want to marry Charles Oldfield?"

"Yes, I do. I wanted to almost as soon as I met him."

"Then his wife's death was very convenient for you?"

Jean Moncrieffe said: "Mrs. Oldfield was a singularly unpleasant woman. Frankly, I was delighted when she died."

Poirot said: "I have a suggestion to make. Drastic means are required here. I suggest that somebody — possibly yourself — might write to the Home Office."

"What on earth do you mean?"

"I mean that the best way of disposing of this story once and for all is to get the body exhumed and an autopsy performed."

Jean Moncrieffe said quietly: "I don't agree with you."

"Why not? Surely a verdict of death from natural causes would silence all tongues."

"If you got that verdict, yes."

"Do you know what you are suggesting, Mademoiselle?"

"I know what I'm talking about. You're thinking of arsenic poisoning. But there are other poisons — the vegetable alkaloids. After a year, I doubt if you'd find any traces of them even if they had been used. And I know what these official analyst people are like. They might return a non-committal verdict saying that there was nothing to show what caused death — and then the tongues would wag faster than ever."

"Who in your opinion is the most inveterate talker in the village?"

"I really think old Miss Leatheran is the worst cat of the lot."

"Ah! Could you introduce me to Miss Leatheran — in a casual manner?"

"Nothing would be easier. All the old tabbies are prowling about doing their shopping at this time of the morning. We've only got to walk down the main street."

So they set off. Outside the post office Jean stopped and spoke to a tall middle-aged woman with a long nose and sharp eyes.

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"Good morning, Miss Leatheran."

"Good morning, Jean. Nice day, isn't it?"

"Let me introduce M. Poirot, who is staying down here for a few days."

Nibbling at a scone and balancing a cup of tea on his knee, Poirot became confidential with his hostess. Miss Leatheran had asked him to tea and made it her business to find out exactly what this exotic little foreigner was doing in their midst.

For some minutes he parried her thrusts — thereby whetting her appetite. Then he leant forward: "Ah, Miss Leatheran, you are too clever for me. You have guessed my secret. It is true that I am here at the request of the Home Office. But please keep this information to yourself."

"Of course — the Home Office — you don't mean — *not* poor Mrs. Oldfield?"

Poirot nodded his head. "We-ell!" breathed Miss Leatheran ecstatically.

"It is a delicate matter, you understand. I have been ordered to report whether there is a sufficient case for exhumation."

"You are going to dig the poor thing up. How terrible!" If she had said, "How splendid" the words would have suited her tone of voice better.

"And what is your own opinion, Miss Leatheran?"

"Well, of course, M. Poirot, there has been a lot of talk. But I never listen to talk. There is no doubt that Dr. Oldfield has been very odd in his manner ever since it happened, but as I have said repeatedly, we surely need not put that down to a guilty conscience. It might be just grief. Not, of course, that he and his wife were on really affectionate terms. That I *do* know — on first-hand authority. Nurse Harrison, who was with Mrs. Oldfield for three or four years up to the time of her death, has admitted that much. And I have always felt that Nurse Harrison had her suspicions — not that she ever said anything, but one can *tell* from a person's manner."

"One has so little to go upon," said Poirot.

"Yes, I know, but of course, M. Poirot, if the body is exhumed then you will know."

"Yes," said Poirot, "then we will know."

"There have been cases like it before, of course," said Miss Leatheran, her nose twitching with pleasurable excitement. "Crippen for one. I've always wondered if Ethel Le Neve was in it with him, or not. Of course, Jean Moncrieffe is a very nice girl. I'm sure I wouldn't like to say she led him on exactly — but they were thrown very much together." Poirot looked at her innocently.

"And, of course, with a postmortem and all that, so much would be bound to come out, wouldn't it? Servants always know so much, don't they? And it's quite impossible to keep them from gossiping. The Oldfields' Beatrice was dismissed almost immediately after the funeral, and I've always thought that was odd. It looks as though Dr. Oldfield was afraid she

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might *know* something."

"It certainly seems as though there were grounds for an inquiry."

Miss Leatheran shivered. "One does so shrink from the idea! Our dear, quiet little village — dragged into the newspapers — all the *publicity!*"

"And, as you say, it is probably nothing but gossip!" sighed Poirot.

"Well, I wouldn't like to say *that.* You know I do think it's so true — the saying that there's no smoke without fire."

Poirot rose. "I can trust your discretion, Mademoiselle?"

"Oh, *of course!* I shall not say a *word* to *anybody.*"

On the doorstep Poirot said to the maid who handed him his hat: "I am down here to inquire into the circumstances of Mrs. Oldfield's death, but I shall be obliged if you will keep that strictly to yourself."

Gladys nearly fell backward into the umbrella stand. She breathed excitedly: "Oh, sir, then the doctor did do her in?"

"You've thought so for some time, haven't you?"

"Well, sir, it wasn't me. It was Beatrice. She was up there when Mrs. Oldfield died."

"She thought there had been" — Poirot selected melodramatic words — "foul play?"

Gladys nodded excitedly. "Yes, she did. And she said so did Nurse that was up there — Nurse Harrison. Ever so fond of Mrs. Oldfield she was, and ever so distressed when she died, and Beatrice always said as how Nurse Harrison knew something about it because she turned right round against the doctor afterwards and she wouldn't of done that unless there was something wrong, would she?"

"Where is Nurse Harrison now?"

"She looks after old Miss Bristow — down at the end of the village. You can't miss it — pillars and a porch."

It was a very short time afterwards that Hercule Poirot found himself sitting opposite Nurse Harrison. She was a still handsome woman nearing forty. She had the serene features of a madonna, with sympathetic dark eyes. She listened to him attentively. Then she said slowly: "Yes, I know that unpleasant stories are going about. I have done what I could to stop them, but it's hopeless."

"But there must have been *something* to give rise to these rumors?" Poirot noted that her expression of distress deepened. But she merely shook her head perplexedly.

"Perhaps Dr. Oldfield and his wife did not get on well together and that started the rumor?"

Nurse Harrison shook her head. "Oh no, Dr. Oldfield was always kind and patient with his wife."

"He was really fond of her?"

"No — I would not quite say that. Mrs. Oldfield was very difficult, hard to please and made constant demands for sympathy and attention which were not always justified."

"She exaggerated her condition?"

The nurse nodded. "Yes — her bad health was largely her own imagination."

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"And yet she died. . . ."

"Oh, I know — I know."

He watched her for a minute or two, her troubled perplexity — her uncertainty. He said: "I think — I am sure — that you do know what first gave rise to all these stories."

Nurse Harrison flushed. "Well — I could, perhaps, make a guess. I believe it was the maid, Beatrice, who started the rumors and I think I know what put it into her head.

"You see, it was something I happened to overhear — a scrap of conversation between Dr. Oldfield and Miss Moncrieffe, and I'm pretty certain Beatrice overheard it too, only I don't suppose she'd ever admit it."

Nurse Harrison paused for a minute as though to test the accuracy of her own memory: "It was about three weeks before the last attack that killed Mrs. Oldfield. They were in the dining room. I was going down the hall when I heard Jean Moncrieffe say: 'How much longer will it be? I can't bear to wait much longer.' The doctor answered her: 'Not much longer now, darling. I swear it.'

"And she said again: 'I can't bear this waiting. You do think it will be all right, don't you?' And he said: 'Of course. Nothing can go wrong. This time next year we'll be married.'

"That was the very first inkling I'd had, M. Poirot, that there was anything between the doctor and Miss Moncrieffe. Of course, I knew he admired her and that they were very good friends. I went back up the stairs again — it had given me quite a shock — but I did notice that the kitchen door was open and I've thought since that Beatrice must have been listening. You can see, can't you, that the way they were talking could be taken two ways? It might just mean that the doctor knew his wife was very ill and couldn't live much longer — and I've no doubt that that was the way it was — but to anyone like Beatrice it might mean more than that — it might look as though the doctor and Jean Moncrieffe were — well — planning to do away with Mrs. Oldfield."

"But you don't think so yourself?"

"No — no, of course not."

Poirot looked at her. "Nurse Harrison, is there something more that you know? Something you haven't told me?"

"No! What could there be?"

"I do not know. But I thought that there might be — something."

She shook her head.

Poirot said: "It is possible that the Home Office may order an exhumation of Mrs. Oldfield's body!"

"Oh no! — What a horrible thing!"

"You think it would be a pity?"

"I think it would be *dreadful!* Think how terrible for poor Dr. Oldfield."

"You don't think that it would really be a good thing for him?"

"How do you mean?"

Poirot said: "If he is innocent —" He broke off. He watched the thought take root in Nurse Harrison's mind, saw her frown perplexedly, and then saw her brow clear.

She took a deep breath and looked at him. "I hadn't thought of that. Of

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course, it is the only thing to be done."

There were a series of thumps on the floor above. Nurse Harrison started.

"It's my old lady, Miss Bristow. She's waked up from her rest. I must go. Yes, M. Poirot, I think you are quite right. A postmortem will settle the business once and for all. It will scotch the whole thing and all these dreadful rumors will die down."

Hercule Poirot walked along to the post office. He had a London call.

The voice at the other end was petulant:

"Must you go nosing out these things, my dear Poirot? Are you sure it's a case for us? You know what these country town rumors usually amount to — nothing at all."

"This is a special case."

"Oh well — if you say so. You have such a tiresome habit of being right. But if it's all a mare's nest we shan't be pleased with you, you know." Poirot smiled to himself.

Emerging into the post office, he leaned across the counter. He said in his most engaging tones: "Can you by any chance tell me, Madame, where Beatrice, the maid who was formerly with Dr. Oldfield, now resides?"

"Beatrice King? She's with Mrs. Marley over the Bank now."

Poirot thanked her, bought a book of stamps, and during the purchase contrived to bring the death of the late Mrs. Oldfield into the conversation. He was quick to note the peculiar furtive expression that stole across the postmistress's face. She said:

"Very sudden, wasn't it? It's made a lot of talk as you may have heard." A gleam of interest came into her eyes. "Maybe that's what you'd be wanting to see Beatrice for? We all thought it odd the way she was got out of there all of a sudden. Somebody thought she knew something — and maybe she did. She's dropped some broad hints."

Beatrice King was a short, sly-looking girl. She presented an appearance of stolid stupidity, but her eyes were more intelligent. There was nothing to be got out of Beatrice King, it seemed. She repeated:

"I don't know nothing about anything. It's not for me to say what went on up there. I don't know what you mean by overhearing a conversation between the doctor and Miss Moncrieffe. I'm not one to go listening to doors. I don't know nothing."

Poirot said: "Have you ever heard of poisoning by arsenic?"

A flicker of interest came into her sullen face. She said: "So that's what it was in the bottle?"

"What bottle?"

"One of the bottles of medicine what that Miss Moncrieffe made up for the Missus. Nurse was all upset — I could see that. Tasted it, she did, and smelt it, and then poured it away down the sink and filled it up with plain water from the tap. It was white like water anyway. And once when Miss Moncrieffe took up a pot of tea to the Missus, Nurse brought it down again and made it fresh — said it hadn't been made with boiling water but that was just my eye, that was.

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Thought it was just the sort of fussing way nurses have at the time."

"Did you like Miss Moncrieffe?"

"I didn't mind her. A bit of standoffish. Of course, I always knew as she was sweet on the doctor."

Again Poirot nodded his head. He went back to the inn. There he gave certain instructions to Georges.

Dr. Alan Garcia rubbed his hands and twinkled at Hercule Poirot. He said: "Well, this suits you, M. Poirot, I suppose?"

"It suits me admirably!"

The following day he once more took a train to Market Loughborough. With him was a large burly-looking gentleman.

Market Loughborough had buzzed mildly ever since the exhumation proceedings. Now that the findings of the autopsy were out, excitement had reached fever heat. Poirot and his companion had been at the inn for about an hour and had just finished a hearty lunch when word was brought to Poirot that a lady was waiting to see him.

The two men adjourned to an upstairs sitting room, where they found Nurse Harrison waiting. Her face was white and haggard. She said, "Is this true? Is this really true, M. Poirot?"

He put her gently into a chair. "Yes. More than sufficient arsenic to cause death has been found."

"I never thought — I never thought —" She burst into tears.

Poirot said gently: "The truth had to come out, you know."

She sobbed: "Will they hang him?"

"There is a warrant out for his arrest, but there is a lot that has to be proved still. Opportunity — access to poison —"

"But supposing, M. Poirot, that he had nothing to do with it — at all."

"In that case, he will be acquitted."

Nurse Harrison said slowly: "There is something — something that, I suppose, I ought to have told you before — but I didn't think that there was really anything in it. It was just *queer*."

"I knew there was something," said Poirot. "You had better tell it to us now."

"It isn't much. It's just that one day when I went down to the dispensary for something, Jean Moncrieffe was doing something rather — odd."

"Yes?"

"It sounds so silly. It's only that she was filling up her powder compact — a pink enamel one."

"Yes?"

"But, you see, she wasn't filling it up with powder — with face powder, I mean. She was tipping something into it from one of the bottles out of the poison cupboard. When she saw me she started and shut it up and whipped it into her bag — and put back the bottle quickly into the cupboard so that I couldn't see what it was. I daresay it doesn't mean anything — but now that I know — well, I've wondered."

Poirot glanced at his burly companion. He said: "Have you got a

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search warrant?"

Detective Sergeant Grey nodded. He went out. Poirot and Nurse Harrison waited. Poirot sighed.

Nurse Harrison said: "What are you thinking of?"

"The pity of things. . . ."

Nurse Harrison said: "I don't believe for a minute *he* knew anything about it."

"No. I am sure he did not."

The door opened and Detective Sergeant Grey came in. He had something in his hand, wrapped in a silk handkerchief. He unwrapped it and set it carefully down. It was a bright rose-pink enamel compact. Nurse Harrison said: "That's the one I saw."

Grey said: "Found it pushed right to the back of Miss Moncrieffe's bureau drawer. Inside a handkerchief sachet. As far as I can see there are no fingerprints on it, but I'll be careful."

With the handkerchief over his hand he pressed the spring. The case flew open. Grey said: "This stuff isn't face powder."

He dipped a finger and tasted it gingerly. "No particular taste."

Poirot said: "White arsenic does not taste."

Grey said: "It will be analyzed at once." He looked at Nurse Harrison. "You can swear to this being the same case?"

"Yes. I'm positive. That's the case I saw Miss Moncrieffe with in the dispensary about a week before Mrs. Oldfield's death."

Sergeant Grey sighed. He looked at Poirot and nodded. The latter rang the bell. "Send my servant here, please."

Georges entered and looked inquiringly at his master. Hercule Poirot said: "You have identified this powder compact, Miss Harrison, as one you saw in the possession of Miss Moncrieffe over a year ago. Would you be surprised to learn that this particular case was sold by Messrs. Brown and Sons *only a week ago* and that, moreover, it is of a pattern and color that has only been manufactured *since three months ago?*"

Nurse Harrison gasped. She stared at Poirot, her eyes round and dark.

Poirot said: "Have you seen this compact before, Georges?"

"Yes, sir. I observed this person, Nurse Harrison, purchase it at Brown's last Friday week. Pursuant to your instructions, I followed this lady whenever she went out. She took a bus over to Darnington on the day I have mentioned and purchased this compact. She took it home with her. Later the same day, she came to the house in which Miss Moncrieffe lodges. Acting as by your instructions, I was already in the house. I observed her go into Miss Moncrieffe's bedroom and hide this in the back of the bureau drawer. I had a good view through the crack of the door. She then left the house, believing herself unobserved. I may say that no one locks their doors down here."

Poirot turned to Nurse Harrison. His voice was hard: "Can you explain these facts, Nurse Harrison? I think not. There was no arsenic in that box

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when it left Messrs. Brown & Sons. But there was when it left your house. It was unwise of you to keep a supply of arsenic in your possession."

Nurse Harrison buried her face in her hands. She said in a low dull voice: "It's true — it's all true . . . I killed her. And all for nothing — nothing . . . I was *mad*."

Jean Moncrieffe said: "I must ask you to forgive me, M. Poirot. I have been so angry with you — so terribly angry with you. It seemed that you were making things so much worse."

Poirot said with a smile: "So I was to begin with. It is like the old legend of the Lernean Hydra. Every time a head was cut off, two heads grew in its place. So, to begin with, the rumors grew and multiplied.

"But you see my task, like that of my namesake Hercules, was to reach the first — the original head. Who had started this rumor? It did not take me long to discover that the originator of the story was Nurse Harrison. I went to see her. She appeared to be a very charming woman — intelligent and sympathetic. But almost at once she made a bad mistake — she repeated to me a conversation which she had overheard between you and the doctor, and that conversation *was all wrong*. It was psychologically most unlikely. If you and the doctor had planned together to kill Mrs. Oldfield, you are both of you far too intelligent and level-headed to hold such a conversation in a room with an open door, easily overheard by anyone on the stairs or in the kitchen.

"Moreover, the words assigned to you did not fit in at all with your mental make-up. They were the words of a much older woman and of a quite different type, words such as would be imagined by Nurse Harrison as being used by herself in like circumstances.

"I had up to then regarded the whole matter as fairly simple. Nurse Harrison, I realized, was a still attractive woman — she had been thrown closely with Dr. Oldfield for nearly three years — the doctor had been very fond of her and grateful to her for her tact and sympathy. She had formed the impression that if Mrs. Oldfield died, the doctor would probably ask her to marry him. But instead of that, after Mrs. Oldfield's death, she learns that Dr. Oldfield is in love with you. Angry and jealous, she starts spreading the rumor that Dr. Oldfield has poisoned his wife.

"That, as I say, was how I had visualized the position up to now. But the trite old phrase 'no smoke without fire' recurred to me significantly. I wondered if Nurse Harrison had done more than spread a rumor? Certain things she said rang strangely. She told me that Mrs. Oldfield's illness was largely imaginary — and she did not really suffer much pain. But the doctor himself had been in no doubt about the reality of his wife's suffering. He himself had not been surprised by her death. He had called in another doctor shortly before her death and the other doctor had realized the gravity of her condition. I

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brought forward the suggestion of exhumation. Nurse Harrison was at first frightened out of her wits by the idea. Then, almost at once, her jealousy and hatred took command of her. She would go through with it — the doctor and Jean Moncrieffe should suffer.

"There was only one hope. To make Nurse Harrison overreach herself. There was a chance that Jean Moncrieffe would escape. I fancied that Nurse Harrison would strain every nerve to involve her in the crime. I gave instructions to Georges — the most unobtrusive of men — whom she did not know by sight. He was to follow her closely."

Jean said: "You've been wonderful."

Dr. Oldfield chimed in. "I can never thank you enough. What a blind fool I was."

Poirot said: "Were you so blind, Mademoiselle?"

Jean said: "I was terribly worried. The arsenic in the poison cupboard didn't tally."

Oldfield cried: "Jean — you didn't think?"

"No. What I did think was that Mrs. Oldfield had somehow or other got hold of it — she could easily get your key when you were in the bathroom — and that she was taking it so as to be ill and get sympathy and that she had inadvertently taken too much. But I was afraid that if there was an autopsy and arsenic was found they would never consider that theory and would leap to the conclusion that you'd done it. That's why I never said anything about the missing arsenic. I even cooked the poison book. But the last person I would ever have suspected was Nurse Harrison."

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In his testimonial to EQMM, John Dickson Carr wrote: "What I look for is not a clumsy concoction of boy-meets-girl-with-detective-incidents, but a detective story with an original idea. That's what I find in every issue of EQMM." One of the reasons our good friend John finds originality in EQMM is James Yaffe — for even when young Mr. Yaffe draws on past glory, he adds his own inimitable touch. Yaffe has a flair for "ideas," a talent for ingenuity. Even more important, his work breathes a youthful spontaneity that is irresistible. In a recent letter to your Editor, Mr. Carr asked: "What news of the Department of Impossible Crimes? — I wait with avidity."

Here, John, is the new Yaffe story of the D.I.C. Actually it was written before "Cul de Sac" and "The Problem of the Emperor's Mushrooms," but for good and sufficient reasons, now well-known to you and all other loyal EQMMers, publication was delayed until Mr. Yaffe could make his criminological come-back.

Hail the conquering hero!

THE COMIC OPERA MURDERS

by JAMES YAFFE

INSPECTOR STANLEY FLEDGE
NEW YORK CITY HOMICIDE BUREAU
NEW YORK, N. Y.

DEAR LESTRADE,

ARRIVED SAFELY AT OXFORD MAINE THIS MORNING. FISHING IS WONDERFUL. HUNTING IS WONDERFUL. SWIMMING IS WONDERFUL. LIFE IS WONDERFUL. LETTER WILL FOLLOW.

PAUL

Inspector Stanley Fledge
New York City Homicide Bureau
New York, N. Y.

Dear Minion of the Law,

You have no idea what life is really like until you've spent part of it on your back in a rowboat in the middle of Lake Thompson. The water here is as cool as a morgue slab; the sunset as red as the Commissioner's bald spot; and existence is as peaceful as a corpse. Believe me, this is the way to live.

I know, of course, that you thought I'd never do it. A hundred times I saw that smug, skeptical smile on your face. "Have your fun, you optimist!" it said, "Stay up nights looking at road maps and travel folders! Waste your money on expensive fishing tackle! You'll end up by spending your summer right here at the Homicide Bureau, sweating over a hot fingerprint!"

Excuse me, then, if I murmur a mild "I told you so." Having looked forward to this vacation for fifteen

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years, I never intended that the sarcastic sneers of an envious old cop should spoil my fun. I made up my mind to do it — and in spite of your bad wishes, I did it.

I'll have to cut this off now. It is time for my guide, an ancient and grizzled citizen named Basil, to drive me into the nearby town to buy fishing tackle. I really don't need any fishing tackle, but Basil fascinates me. He speaks an amazing and completely bewildering backwoods dialect which, as soon as I decipher it, will be the basis for a hell of a crossword puzzle.

Comfortably yours,

Paul

Mr. Paul Dawn
Mahoosic Lodge
Oxford, Me.

Dear Paul,

Feeling mighty pleased with yourself, aren't you? Well, I just want you to know that I'm still not convinced. I give exactly two weeks to this big game hunt of yours. At the end of two weeks, you're going to be sick and tired of tracking down trout and snapping handcuffs on wild moose. You'll bundle yourself on to the first train back to New York — fishing tackle, bear skin, sun tan, and all. And I'll be waiting at the station to give you the horse laugh. A man who's been solving impossible crimes for fifteen years isn't so easily satisfied with shadowing a school of salmon.

Have a good time while it lasts,

Fledge

P.S. So far I haven't found anybody to take over the Department of Impossible Crimes in your absence. A pity, too, because I ran across an impossible disappearance the other day that's right in your line.

Inspector Stanley Fledge
New York City Homicide Bureau
New York, N. Y.

Dear Fledge,

Shades of Diana! I went hunting today and bagged my first prize, and what's more, Basil says that I acquitted myself like a veteran. I tracked the beast for nearly a mile, through dense woods and dark forest, sticking to his trail only by the rustling of leaves as he scampered through the underbrush. It was suspenseful, nerve-wracking — and then I finally cornered him under a pile of dead twigs. I raised my gun to my shoulder, took steady aim, and without batting an eyelash pulled the trigger. The first shot nearly did away with Basil! The second shot, however, went cleanly through the target. And there he was, lying on his back, looking proud and fierce — and giving off the damnedest smell — a big, dead skunk! Remind me to send you the carcass for your birthday.

Love,

Frank Buck

P.S. You are about as subtle, Fledge, as a steam-roller. Did you really think that your painfully casual reference to an "impossible disappearance" would arouse my

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interest? I am amused that you should have stooped to such a puerile trick. Make no mistake about it, I have no intention of concerning myself with the sordid doings of the Homicide Squad.

Mr. Paul Dawn
Mahoosic Lodge
Oxford, Me.

Dear Paul,

I read your letter eagerly, and it warmed my heart, actually warmed my heart, to find out how much fun you're having. I was never very keen on skunk-hunting myself, but if that's the sort of thing you like to do then I'm really happy for you.

I mentioned an impossible disappearance in my last letter, an extremely peculiar case which I'm sure you want to hear more about. I realize, of course, that you are enjoying your vacation, so I will be careful not to go into detail about this case. I will restrict myself to a brief list of its more outstanding peculiarities.

The victim disappeared into thin air in front of witnesses.

On the very spot on the floor where the victim had been standing was found — of all things! — a small piece of sealing wax.

A mysterious note arrived at the police station the next day, claiming that the victim had been "melted in wax" by a sorcerer. It was signed by someone calling himself *The Lord High Executioner.*

The disappearance occurred within a week of two peculiar murders, both of which had also been followed by notes from *The Lord High Executioner.*

But I do not want to bother you any longer with professional matters.

Your pal,

Fledge

Inspector Stanley Fledge
New York City Homicide Bureau
New York, N. Y.

Dear Inspector,

Once and for all, get it into your head that I do not give a hoot about your sealing wax, Lord High Executioner, and impossible disappearance. Your obvious attempt to get me interested in them was a failure, a pitiful and dismal failure! I positively, absolutely, unquestionably, refuse to give you any advice on the case. Furthermore, if you persist in spoiling my vacation with your odious communications, I shall personally instruct the Governor of Maine to secede from the Union.

Love,

The Misanthrope

Mr. Paul Dawn
Mahoosic Lodge
Oxford, Me.

Dear Paul,

I appreciate your feelings completely. Had I known how much my letter would upset you, I never would have written it. From now on, I shall not so much as mention the Comic Opera Murders. I will not even ex-

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plain to you that they have been called the Comic Opera Murders because of a certain odd coincidence. I won't even bother to tell you what the coincidence is, that all three murders were planned and executed over fifty years ago *in the works of Gilbert and Sullivan!* Indeed, it is best that you know nothing of these things.

Your chum,

Fledge

INSPECTOR STANLEY FLEDGE
NEW YORK CITY HOMICIDE BUREAU
NEW YORK, N. Y.

DEAR FLEDGE,

WILL NOT ALLOW YOUR CHILDISH DROOLINGS TO SPOIL MY VACATION. DEFINITELY REFUSE TO LISTEN.

PAUL

MR. PAUL DAWN
MAHOOSIC LODGE
OXFORD, ME.

DEAR PAUL,

WOULD NOT SPOIL YOUR VACATION FOR ANYTHING. THOUGHT YOU'D LIKE TO KNOW THAT MAYOR IS UP IN ARMS ABOUT COMIC OPERA MURDERS. GILBERT AND SULLIVAN ESTATES THREATEN TO SUE.

FLEDGE

INSPECTOR STANLEY FLEDGE
NEW YORK CITY HOMICIDE BUREAU
NEW YORK, N. Y.

DEAR FLEDGE,

GO TO HELL.

PAUL

MR. PAUL DAWN
MAHOOSIC LODGE
OXFORD, ME.

DEAR PAUL,

FLATTERY WILL GET YOU NOWHERE. NEW DEVELOPMENT IN COMIC OPERA MURDERS. ANALYSIS OF SEALING WAX REVEALS TRACES OF HUMAN HAIR. HOW'S THE FISHING?

FLEDGE

INSPECTOR STANLEY FLEDGE
NEW YORK CITY HOMICIDE BUREAU
NEW YORK, N. Y.

DEAR BENEDICT ARNOLD,

ALL RIGHT, STINKER, YOU WIN. DISTURB MY REST. SHATTER MY PEACE. DESTROY MY COMFORT. TELL ME ABOUT YOUR DAMNED COMIC OPERA MURDERS. POLICEMAN'S LOT IS NOT A HAPPY ONE.

PAUL

Mr. Paul Dawn
Mahoosic Lodge
Oxford, Me.

Dear Paul,

Your request for more information about the Comic Opera Murders came as a complete surprise to me. First you left the city in order to get away from the bloody side of life — and now you've decided to concern yourself in our sordid doings. All right, then —

The first murder occurred about two weeks ago, on the day the D'Arcy-Blunt Comic Opera Company was scheduled to open in a series of Gilbert and Sullivan revivals. The D'Arcy-

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Blunt Company has been giving Gilbert and Sullivan in London and New York for sixty years, ever since the first D'Arcy-Blunt presented *Ruddigore* in competition with Sir William Gilbert's own production. The New York opening was to be quite a social event.

The leading tenor in the D'Arcy-Blunt Company was Thomas Willow — a great favorite with the connoisseurs — who had been singing Gilbert and Sullivan heroes for nearly seventeen years. Willow was a tall, handsome fellow, very egotistical and much too fond of gambling. As a result, though he drew a larger salary than anyone else in the company, he was often badly in need of money. Willow was also a ladies' man and went around trying to prove it, a bad habit which usually landed him in trouble. One time he ended up in a hospital with some broken bones, because Tony Arnstruther, the leading comedian, caught him making love to his (Arnstruther's) wife.

Tuesday night, the D'Arcy-Blunt Company was going to open its season with *The Mikado*. Tuesday morning, Willow was seen at the final rehearsal, dressed in the costume of the hero, Nanki-Poo, a part he had played several hundred times before. Tuesday afternoon, passengers on a ferryboat saw Willow's body floating in the Hudson River. He was still wearing his Nanki-Poo costume. The cause of death was undoubtedly drowning.

I passed the whole thing off as the routine suicide of a desperate man with too many gambling debts.

The next day the first note arrived in the afternoon mail. The note had been mailed the previous night at a downtown post office. It was neatly typewritten on a sheet of cheap stationery, and contained a short quotation from Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado*.

"*. . . He sobbed and he sighed*
And a gurgle he gave,
Then he plunged himself into
The billowy wave —
Oh willow, titwillow, titwillow . . ."

And the note was signed: *The Lord High Executioner.*

It was uncanny, Paul. It sent the shivers up my spine. On a perfectly ordinary day sixty years ago, Gilbert and Sullivan wrote a song about a Tom Tit, a titwillow, who plunged into a river. Sixty years later, a songbird named Thomas Willow plunged into the billowy Hudson River. Probably with the help of The Lord High Executioner.

The first thing I did after I read that note was go out and buy a copy of The Complete Works of Gilbert and Sullivan, and look up that quotation from *The Mikado*. I discovered two things about it that seem interesting. The "titwillow" quotation comes from a song which is sung by a comedy character named Ko-Ko, *otherwise known as The Lord High Executioner!* The part of The Lord High Executioner has been played in the D'Arcy-Blount Company for more than twenty years by the leading

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comedian, Tony Arnstruther, the same Tony Arnstruther who nearly beat Thomas Willow to death for making love to his wife.

I worried about this until Thursday evening when the second murder occurred, this time right on the stage of the theatre in front of a swanky audience. The second victim was Sir Herbert D'Arcy-Blunt himself, producer and owner of the company, along with his wife. Sir Herbert, a Gilbert-and-Sullivan-ite of the old school, was a highly superstitious old man who believed that unless he himself appeared on the stage at some time during the performance it was bound to fail miserably. Every performance for twenty years, Sir Herbert would come down to the theatre, change into his costume, and walk out in front of the audience as an obscure member of the chorus. In the stormiest weather, in the middle of an attack of pneumonia, Sir Herbert would struggle out of bed in order to attend the performance. Even in later years, while suffering from a bad case of the gout, Sir Herbert refused to give up his duties with the chorus.

On the night of his murder, Sir Herbert was on stage for the finale of *The Gondoliers*. It was a loud, raucous scene, with the entire cast singing and drinking glasses of wine. Somebody gave Sir Herbert a glass, he raised it into the air along with the rest of the chorus, and then he tossed it off in one gulp. Two minutes later he toppled over on the stage; by the time the curtain was lowered, he was dead. There was enough cyanide in his wine to kill the whole chorus.

I tried to find out who had given Sir Herbert his glass, but nobody could tell me anything. The cast had been too busy singing and drinking, and the audience had been too busy watching the cast; nobody had paid the least bit of attention to Sir Herbert; he might have been poisoned by anyone who was on the stage at the finale. Tony Arnstruther had been standing near him. So had every other principal in the company.

I found a note lying on my desk when I arrived at the office the next morning. It had been typewritten on the same cheap paper and mailed the previous morning. It contained a short quotation from Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Gondoliers*.

". . . A taste for drink combined with gout
Had doubled him up forever.
Of that there is no manner of doubt —
No probable, possible shadow of doubt —
No possible doubt whatever . . ."

The note was signed: *The Lord High Executioner.*

I was now convinced that The Lord High Executioner was some sort of maniac with a Gilbert and Sullivan complex. I sent out inquiries to all the nearby asylums about escaped lunatics. I was still waiting for results two days later when the third crime, the impossible disappearance, took place.

Walter Lanier, a young baritone who sings the parts of villains in the

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company, had told several members of the cast about a rich old uncle of his who lived in South America. He never mentioned, however, that his uncle was going to pay him a visit. Saturday afternoon, after the matinée, while young Lanier was in his dressing room taking off his make-up, his Uncle Peter appeared at the stage door. Andy, the old doorkeeper, who has been with the theatre for God knows how many years, showed the rich old uncle to his nephew's dressing room. Uncle Peter knocked on the door, announced who he was; Lanier seemed surprised, but he called out for him to come in. Uncle Peter went in and shut the door behind him; and that was the last Andy saw of him.

It was not, however, the last he heard of him. Andy, being an inquisitive soul, especially about prosperous-looking strangers, dropped to his knees and proceeded to listen at the keyhole. He heard Lanier suddenly, in a loud voice, ask "Uncle Peter" who he was. Then, after the old man's reply, he heard Lanier insist that this man was an imposter, and order him out of the room. Uncle Peter protested some more; Lanier got madder and madder; all of a sudden there was a thud, and then a grunt. After that, Andy could hear nothing more.

Well, the old doorkeeper began to get worried after a while. He knocked on the door several times. No answer. He tried to open it. But it was locked from inside. Andy called for a couple of stagehands. They rammed the door open, and found Lanier lying on the floor with a sizeable bump on his head, and groaning something like: "Imposter — make-up job!"

When Lanier finally came around, he said the man who pretended to be his uncle, the imposter, reminded him vaguely of someone in the D'Arcy-Blunt Company.

"But where is he?" Lanier demanded, looking around.

Andy swore "Uncle Peter" hadn't left by the dressing-room door.

"But there's no other way to get out of the room!" Lanier exclaimed. "My God, it's impossible!"

And my God! it was. We searched the dressing room, the closet, the small connecting washroom — no sign of "Uncle Peter," no sign of a secret exit, no sign of anything. And Andy had been watching the only possible exit every minute of the time. "Uncle Peter" seemed to have melted away.

It was while I was searching the floor that I found, on the spot where Uncle Peter had been standing, a small piece of sealing wax. It meant nothing to me, nor to Walter Lanier who said he had never seen it before. But the next day I received another note, postmarked the previous morning, containing a quotation from Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Sorcerer:*

". . . *If you want a proud foe to make tracks —*
If you'd melt a rich uncle in wax —
You've but to look in
On our resident Djinn . . ."

It's impossible, Paul! Dizzily,

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crazily, beautifully impossible! This is the twentieth century. There are no sorcerers. There are no Djinns. Not even little Djinns. People don't go around melting phoney uncles in wax. At least not in the best circles.

I'm getting damned fed up with this Lord High Executioner's gruesome sense of humor.

Exasperatingly yours,

Fledge

Inspector Stanley Fledge
New York City Homicide Bureau
New York, N. Y.

Dear Fledge,

I spent a pleasant morning lying on my back and forming a mental picture of the hell that must have broken loose around you because of your inability to find the Comic Opera murderer. Has the Commissioner threatened to make you a Sergeant?

Your frantic account of the Comic Opera Murders makes it perfectly clear that you, Fledge, have succeeded in doing nothing in particular about finding the killer, and doing it very well. It was high time that a professional stepped in to rescue the case from the miserable bungling of amateurs. An idea has already taken root in my mind; I have a small glimmering as to who your Lord High Executioner is and what he wants; but I cannot possibly reach a final conclusion without the answers to several extremely important questions. I have, therefore, emulated one of Gilbert's characters and "made a little list." Try to answer these as carefully as you can.

1. How long after the discovery of Thomas Willow's body did the newspapers carry the story of his death?
2. What was the man who claimed to be Walter Lanier's Uncle Peter wearing when he visited his nephew?
3. Who, besides The Lord High Executioner, might have wanted to get rid of Sir Herbert D'Arcy-Blunt?
4. Which member of the company plays the part of Dick Deadeye in *H.M.S. Pinafore?*
5. According to Andy, the doorkeeper, what *exactly* did the false Uncle Peter say and do from the time he appeared at the stage door to the time he entered his nephew's dressing room?

Now don't jump out of your chair, Fledge, because I'm absolutely serious. These are the questions I want you to answer. And hurry up about it, too.

Impatiently yours,

Paul

Mr. Paul Dawn
Mahoosic Lodge
Oxford, Me.

Dear Paul,

I spent the last two days finding the answers to your screwy questions, and frankly, I'm more mixed up than ever. Do you really expect these answers to do you any good?

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1. How long after the discovery of Thomas Willow's body did the newspapers carry the story of his death?

Roughly an hour. Willow's body was discovered at 4:17 in the afternoon. At about 5:20 the first newspaper carrying the story was on the streets.

2. What was the man who claimed to be Walter Lanier's Uncle Peter wearing when he visited his nephew?

According to Lanier, he was wearing a big, grey overcoat, a muffler, a derby hat, and a pair of rimless spectacles. Andy, the doorkeeper, confirms the overcoat, the muffler, and the derby; says he didn't notice the spectacles; says he didn't notice anything about Uncle Peter except that he was a "mighty round gentleman."

3. Who, besides The Lord High Executioner, might have wanted to get rid of Sir Herbert D'Arcy-Blunt?

Plenty of people.

Mrs. Herbert D'Arcy-Blunt — because she was twenty years younger than her husband and interested in younger men, from what I hear; because she inherits five hundred thousand dollars and the D'Arcy-Blunt Comic Opera Company.

Tony Arnstruther — because a week before his murder, Sir Herbert told Arnstruther that he was "a broken-down old comic," that he was washed up in Gilbert and Sullivan, and that he was going to be fired at the end of the run.

Walter Lanier — because he had become entirely too friendly with Mrs. D'Arcy-Blunt; because he is not a very wealthy young man and Mrs. D'Arcy-Blunt *is* a wealthy widow.

Mrs. Tony Arnstruther — for the same reasons as her husband.

Andy — because D'Arcy-Blunt, the day before his death, had quarrelled with him, insulted him, and generally tore into the poor old man.

4. Which member of the company plays the part of Dick Deadeye in *H.M.S. Pinafore?*

God knows why you want to find out, but the answer is Walter Lanier. He specializes in "heavies."

5. According to Andy, what exactly did Uncle Peter say and do from the time he appeared at the stage door to the time he entered his nephew's dressing room?

Very little. He approached Andy at the stage door. "How do you do?" he said. "Could I see Mr. Walter Lanier?" Andy asked him if he was expected. "I believe I am," Uncle Peter said. Then Andy led him in silence to Walter Lanier's dressing room. At the dressing-room door, Uncle Peter knocked. "Walter," he said. "It's Uncle Peter!" Lanier made some sort of a reply from inside the dressing room. Uncle Peter then opened the door, walked in, and closed the door behind him.

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Well, there you are, Paul! Now, who do I arrest — Gilbert or Sullivan?

Fledge

INSPECTOR STANLEY FLEDGE
NEW YORK CITY HOMICIDE BUREAU
NEW YORK, N. Y.

DEAR FLEDGE,

DID UNCLE PETER TALK IN DEEP BASS VOICE ON AFTERNOON OF HIS DISAPPEARANCE? ASK ANDY.

PAUL

MR. PAUL DAWN
MAHOOSIC LODGE
OXFORD, ME.

DEAR PAUL,

ARE YOU GETTING PSYCHIC? ANDY SAYS UNCLE PETER TALKED IN VERY DEEP VOICE. WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

FLEDGE

INSPECTOR STANLEY FLEDGE
NEW YORK CITY HOMICIDE BUREAU
NEW YORK, N. Y.

DEAR FLEDGE,

ARREST WALTER LANIER FOR MURDER IMMEDIATELY. LETTER FOLLOWS.

PAUL

Inspector Stanley Fledge
New York City Homicide Bureau
New York, N. Y.

Dear Fledge,

Things are seldom what they seem.

Gilbert and Sullivan said it sixty years ago, but apparently you have forgotten it.

The murder of Thomas Willow was not what it seemed. I realized that as soon as I read your description of Willow's death and was struck by one puzzling inconsistency. Uncle Peter disappeared late in the afternoon. The next day you received a note which had been mailed the *previous morning — before* his disappearance. After D'Arcy-Blunt was killed, you received a note which had been mailed the *previous morning* — again, *before* his murder. But after Thomas Willow died, you received a note which had not been mailed until the *previous night* — this time, *after* the discovery of the body. Why did The Lord High Executioner write the Thomas Willow note *after* the crime occurred, rather than *before*, as in the other two crimes? Simply because The Lord High Executioner did not know that Thomas Willow had died *until after the discovery of the body!* Because Thomas Willow's death was not what it seemed! *Because Thomas Willow was not murdered at all: he committed suicide*, just as you originally suspected! Because The Lord High Executioner did not find out about Willow's death until he read about it in the evening newspapers.

The murderer, a clever individual with no designs against Thomas Willow at all, bought a newspaper some time after 5:20 on the evening of Willow's suicide. Our murderer was an opportunist; the story in the newspaper suggested to him a way in which he could use Willow's death for his own advantage. After a few hours of planning, he emerged with the

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blueprint of an ingenious plot worthy of the great Gilbert himself. The first step in the plot was to concoct a mysterious note which would serve to make the Homicide Squad believe that a maniac with a Gilbert and Sullivan complex was on the loose. Our murderer sat down at a typewriter and dashed off the first note, decorating it with all the conventional sinister trappings and signing it melodramatically *The Lord High Executioner*. He depended upon your fertile imagination to do the rest. You were completely taken in, of course; you believed implicitly in The Lord High Executioner; you made elaborate preparations to hunt for a lunatic, not for a sane and methodical killer.

Why, you ask, did the murderer bother to create the real-life character of The Lord High Executioner and make him responsible for Willow's death? The answer: because the murderer needed a scapegoat for his murder of Herbert D'Arcy-Blunt. The D'Arcy-Blunt murder was not what it seemed, either. You believed it to be just one in a chain of murders committed by a madman; actually the D'Arcy-Blunt murder was the *one important crime*. All along, the one thing our murderer really wanted was to kill D'Arcy-Blunt and later to marry his rich, young widow. The Lord High Executioner, the mysterious notes, the Willow "murder," the disappearance of "Uncle Peter" — all these illusions were just sugar-coating to take your mind off the pill!

Having killed Sir Herbert, our murderer was still not quite satisfied. If The Lord High Executioner ceased activity after committing only two murders, the police might become suspicious — especially of the last murder; they might start an uncomfortable investigation of our murderer's relations with D'Arcy-Blunt's wife. In short, there had to be another murder, a third and final murder, to *clinch the myth* of The Lord High Executioner once and for all. And yet, if possible, our murderer wanted to avoid taking another life. He found the solution in "Uncle Peter."

I wonder if you noticed several odd things about Walter Lanier's "Uncle Peter." First of all, he was obviously a phoney, impersonated by a member of the company who has not yet come forward. But why has the impersonator not admitted the impersonation, if he is not The Lord High Executioner? Conclusion: Uncle Peter *is* The Lord High Executioner. And yet, the last note, the wax, and all the other circumstances, indicate that Uncle Peter was *disposed of* by The Lord High Executioner. Corrected conclusion: Uncle Peter is *not* the Executioner. Then how explain this peculiar paradox?

Well, what sort of entrance did Uncle Peter make? He approached the old doorkeeper at the stage door, bundled up in a big grey overcoat and a muffler; he mumbled a few words in a deep bass voice — *the kind of voice traditionally used by Gilbert and Sullivan heavies*. When he reached the door of his nephew's dressing room, he called out a quick "It's Uncle

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Peter!", waited for an apparent answer, and dodged hastily into the room, without uttering another word.

"So what?" I can hear you asking. Just this! Andy never actually saw Walter Lanier and his Uncle Peter *together!* He heard them talking together — from behind a closed door. He heard Lanier ask who "Uncle Peter" was; he heard the "argument" that Uncle Peter was an imposter. He heard two *voices* — but he never saw *two people.*

You must realize now what I'm getting at: *one person played two parts.* One person used two voices — a simple feat for a professional actor. And who could this one person be? Well, who was found in the dressing room? *Only Lanier!* Therefore, "Uncle Peter" must have been Lanier himself!

Once you accept this fact, you discover how easily the problem of "Uncle Peter's" impossible transformation into a piece of sealing wax (left on the floor deliberately — to tie in with the Gilbert and Sullivan text) clears itself up. Walter Lanier was equipped with a great deal of make-up, and he was used to making himself up as an elderly man, having played the part of Dick Deadeye in the company's *Pinafore.* On the afternoon of Uncle Peter's arrival, Lanier stuffed himself with a couple of pillows, applied his Uncle Peter face, bundled into an overcoat, a muffler, and a derby, and appeared at the stage door as his own relative from South America. He was careful, of course, not to say too much to the doorkeeper, Andy, who knew him as Walter Lanier also.

Andy, however, was completely fooled. He conducted "Uncle Peter" to his nephew's dressing room and watched and listened, while the old man called out to himself, pretended to hear himself answer, entered his own room, "discovered" himself to be an impostor, faked a "struggle" with himself, and then proceeded to cause his own mysterious disappearance by simply washing off the make-up and becoming Walter Lanier once again.

Lanier did not *plan* to commit an impossible crime. Having removed his make-up, he intended simply to remain "unconscious" until he was discovered, and then raise the alarm, in this way providing The Lord High Executioner with a third victim. Andy, however, complicated the scheme by listening at the door. When Andy and the stagehands broke into Lanier's room and found him *alone,* Lanier must have had a bad moment. If he announced that the phoney uncle had disappeared, Andy's presence at the door would prove him a liar. But the uncle *had* disappeared.

So Lanier chose what he considered to be the lesser of two evils: "Where is that imposter?" he groaned (or words to that effect), and thus committed one of the neatest unintentional impossible crimes I've run across.

Let us hope, however, that Mr. Lanier himself will soon get a chance to behold The Lord High Executioner.

Triumphantly yours,

Paul

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A TALE OUT OF THE PAST

M. P. Shiel, the author of such epic romances as THE PURPLE CLOUD *and* THE LORD OF THE SEA, *has been called "brilliant" and "colossal" by H. G. Wells, "an inventor, a stylist, and a scholar" by Arnold Bennett, "a flaming genius" by Hugh Walpole. But in this introduction to Mr. Shiel's first appearance in "Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine," we shall confine ourselves exclusively to Matthew Phipps Shiel, the detective-story writer.*

Mr. Shiel's first published work was PRINCE ZALESKI *(1895). Of this book Dorothy L. Sayers wrote: "*[PRINCE ZALESKI'S] *curious and elaborate beauty recaptures in every arabesque sentence the very accent of Edgar Allan Poe." It is a curious coincidence that Shiel, recreating a half-century later the very atmosphere and spirit of Poe, following in the very footsteps of Poe's purely intellectual ratiocination, should also have written three cases, no more, no less, about Prince Zaleski — exactly as Poe wrote three cases, no more, no less, about Dupin.*

In your Editor's THE DETECTIVE SHORT STORY: A BIBLIOGRAPHY *(1942), we made the statement that* PRINCE ZALESKI *was never published in the United States. The author himself gave us that information, but after fifty-one years of extraordinary literary achievement, Mr. Shiel can be pardoned a minor slip of the memory.* PRINCE ZALESKI *was published in America — by Roberts Bros. of Boston, also in 1895. Both editions — the English first and the American first — are extremely difficult to find these rare rare-book days. The London first edition was No. VII of "The Keynotes Series," published by John Lane, and was bound in purple cloth, of a deep shade peculiarly susceptible to the ravages of air and sunlight. Most copies turn up with badly faded spines — indeed, a copy whose spine still retains its pristine hue is the Ultima Thule of many a collector's bibliophilic barnstorming. The American first edition is equally scarce. Although it contains the original title-page and cover designed by Aubrey Beardsley, it is not as attractive a book as the coveted English edition; the American publisher changed the book-size and typography, and in the process forfeited the graceful proportions and artistic appearance of the original format. The American binding is also inferior; your Editor has two variants — a light blue and a light green cloth, both anemic compared with the English royal purple.*

But we have drifted (an inveterate habit of ours) into bibliobypaths. . . . The breathtaking question is: Did you know that M. P. Shiel created

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a short-story sleuth other than Prince Zaleski? Yes, he did, and so far as your Editor has been able to check, no mention has ever been made, historically or critically, of that other detective. His name is Cummings King Monk, and by strange coincidence again, he also lives in a trilogy, although only one of the three Monk stories is strictly a detective story.

The trinity of tales about Cummings King Monk are to be found in Mr. Shiel's rare volume (rarer by far than PRINCE ZALESKI*) called* THE PALE APE AND OTHER PULSES *(1911). This book was never published in the United States, so the appearance in "Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine" of "Cummings Monk" (title and text slightly condensed by Mr. Shiel himself) brings to American fans for the first time an "unknown" detective story by one of the authentic old masters.*

And now we ask you to read "curious and elaborate beauty": a tale out of the past, out of the "Yellow Book" estheticism of the naughty Nineties, when young Shiel was a member of the exclusive literary coteries of London and Paris — companion and friend of Oscar Wilde, Pierre Louÿs, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Ernest Dowson; a tale of rich and redolent romanticism; a tale of bizarre bravado, Shielesque shenanigans, flamboyant and fantastic felony; a tale of wild, wilful and wily grotesquerie; a tale old-fashioned and bold-fashioned; a tale in which words are bright-plumed birds, phrases are intricate mazes, similes are never facsimiles, metaphors are delicious petit-fours; a tale that illustrates what Ralph Straus, the English critic, meant when he said that "Shiel is too gorgeously mad, too aloof from life as most people know it, but there is magic in his work."

CUMMINGS MONK

by M. P. SHIEL

I WAS down at Abbey How, Monk's house in the Cotswolds, when Monk's weakness of the eyes — for which he wore a button in one ear — came upon him, and now he would cower for days over a library-fire, tamed, a "shade" over his nose. In fact, our life was spent in the library, with every one of its procession of windows shuttered up, so that at midday we were as shut away from the sun as at midnight; and our consciousness that, from outside, the mansion had a look of having been deserted for ages may have confirmed our tendency to indolence, Monk mostly giving no sign of life, save an occasional shiver at the gales of autumn wawling all among the hills.

The reaction, however, in his case, was ever certain. A moment came when he stirred and stretched; then a

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sitting forward, a spring-up, a mutter, "By Jove, I'm hungry!"

For more things than one: for cities, and the storm of things. At the same time he cast the "shade" from his eyes, and said to me: "Do you know what I have been thinking there? That one of the big crimes would rouse and excite us."

"No doubt of that," I said: "against whom shall we commit it?"

"One needn't commit it oneself," he said: "what I mean is that we should first conceive the crime, construct it, then find out someone who is somewhere committing it in the world, and mix ourselves up generally in the trouble."

"But 'find out' in what possible way?" I asked, "and — with what motive?"

"Isn't crime, being a human thing, our business?" he said.

"But — really, Monk ——"

"Crimes — that is what I have been thinking — are of three sorts: little — usually heard of and punished; middle-sized — heard of, but not punished; and big — never heard of."

"What do you call 'big' crimes?" I asked.

"Those which, like Borgia's, Gilles de Rais', are large-minded and dark-minded in mood; and 'little' those which, like burglars' murders, are sordid in mood."

"Suppose, though," I said, "that there are no 'big crimes' going forward at present for us to 'mix ourselves up in'?"

And he: "But isn't everything going forward that ever was or will be — doomsdays, moonfalls, rackets of Nile-cataracts, births of whirling worlds? As for our own sun, never before, credit me, did he blaze more crazily red, or more dreadfully roar on his road — what a bustle and thrill the whole thing is! Big crimes enough, I should think."

"Well, I am willing," I said, "though I like the light of day, and have no wish to be shot. But how on earth — I can't even begin to conceive ——"

"Wait, we shall see; first, let's dine."

After dinner we returned to the library where at once Monk, as he said, "set to work," first assuring me that there was no doubt about the result, since he had several methods in his head, and, if one failed, every one would not. And now he proceeded to spend three hours in a heat of activity, pitching up ladder-steps, eagerly dashing through leaves, with now a grumble, now a shrug, a mutter, hunting the rainbow, to "give to airy nothing a local habitation and a name."

I saw him pry into A B C's, masses of Ordnance maps, through a shelf of old ledgers belonging to the insurance-branch of his House, piles of newspapers, books on science. At last he lit a cigar, cast himself down upon a couch, his arms behind his head, and laughed. It was then ten o'clock.

"Well?" I said.

"Look you," Monk answered, "since modern men are given by heredity a bent against 'sin,' it is under some

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compelling temptation that they commit it. Well, but in temptation there are two elements — wish, opportunity: so that, if I think of a 'sin,' and desire to find out who is committing it, I commence by discovering those who have a roaring opportunity for doing so. Now, suppose I conceive that someone wants, for some reason, to lure a stranger or so into his clutches, what are the ideal conditions as to 'opportunity' which I should seek? Those conditions occur in the case of a man living near one of two obscure railway-stations which have nearly the same name: so I found out the sixty such pairs of stations which exist in Europe, and wrote them down — one such pair being Stratton Eastern and Stratton Western in Scotland. Very good. Now, suppose, on discovering this fact, I discover also this constantly repeated advertisement: 'Summerdale Farm. Paying guests received. Every home comfort. Climate highly recommended by the Profession. Terms moderate. Near Stratton Western, Kincardine. Apply J. P., "Telegraph," Box No. 3715.' And suppose I moreover discover, firstly, that this climate, so highly recommended by the Profession, is the climate of a storm-swept coast, almost uninhabited; and secondly, that there is no record anywhere of any such farm in Kincardine as Summerdale Farm?"

"That might be ugly," I agreed.

"You see, of course," he went on, "what might happen to a 'paying guest' who starts to get to 'Summerdale Farm.' His friends, if he has any, know that he has gone to Stratton Western; his train arrives, let us say one evening, at Stratton Western; his luggage is put upon the local cab, if there is one — upon some species of thing with wheels — and now he gives the order 'Summerdale Farm.' However, his driver knows no Summerdale Farm — no one knows it — it doesn't, in fact, exist. But at last the idea inevitably strikes someone that the stranger has made a mistake — that the farm must be at Stratton Eastern, not at Stratton Western; and, sure at first though our stranger is that it is Western, not Eastern, finally, in his perplexity, and hunger, maybe, he is tempted to try Eastern, whither by the next train he goes. Here someone — maybe disguised — awaits him with a trap. 'Is not he the stranger expected at Summerdale Farm?' Yes. He enters that trap; and a trap it proves. He is driven, a long way perhaps, to a place which is not Summerdale Farm; and no trace from that moment remains of that man in this world."

"Well!" I exclaimed.

"Unless, indeed, the evil-doer has the imprudence to compromise himself by taking out a somewhat unusual number of policies of insurance ——"

"No! Is there someone at Stratton Eastern who has done that?"

"Not far from Stratton Eastern — a certain Sir Saul Ingram, as I see, residing at Feuding Manor thereabouts. Far be it from me to assert that this Sir Saul, who has taken out the policies, and the man who has

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advertised the fictitious farm, are the same. Still, I have a greed on me to see this Feuding Manor, and mean to go to it."

"Not — alone?"

"Yes, since I have a sort of guess in my head that Sir Saul Ingram may be a country squire of unquiet type; and you have said that you like the sun."

His eye twinkled, but his tone was decided. I did not know what to say; and when I woke the next morning my Monk had already taken train northward. At nine the same evening (as it was related to me afterwards) he arrived at Stratton Eastern.

There, after making a good many inquiries, he got to hear something of the whereabouts of Feuding Manor, miles away, and set off on foot over a tract of "links" — sand-dunes mixed with scrub — where the solitude was absolute, great guns of wind blowing a roar of breakers shoreward — wind with something in its tone which seemed to mean that here it was no visitor, but the king of that coast. Warned as he had been in regard to quicksands near the seaboard of the "links," and hearing the roar of breakers grow in his ears, as he dug his way head-foremost in the teeth of the gale, he was directing his course more westward; when a gust tugged his hat from his hands and head, and carted it into the dark. With the wind now at his right shoulder, he went on hatless for some forty minutes, till he found the ground begin to harden; and soon he was following a footpath through a wood of alders that presently thickened to a forest, where he could scarcely see his hand, and then anew thinned to a wood; through which he passed downwards by a path, and now found himself in a vale, enclosed by fells and scars; and he could make out before him a lake of water.

He thought that this ought to be the place: but, as he could discern nothing with any distinctness, he stood in uncertainty a little, until up burned the brim of the moon luridly above a scar; and now he could perceive the shape of a house, darksome, low, large, on an "ait," or island, lying in a mere.

No blink of light came out from it; but, without hesitation, Monk walked down to the edge of the mere; found a causeway of stone leading to the island; went over it; passed at the end of it between two rocks like Druidical "standing-stones," and, sending a flock of black-faced sheep bleating away through bracken, began to prowl round the grounds.

The ground very rough; no visible road: alders and willows huddled all one way by the continual sea-storm; and, as to the house, its structure was most intricate and quaint, the roofs of different breadths, spouts out of the straight, with an outhouse or lean-to here or there. But what struck him was the hoary age of the whole, the walls propped with beams which were themselves watery and soft with rot; and here or there a mass of masonry and beams had tumbled. Every window on both stories was boarded up; and, though Monk again and again

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applied his eyes to the boardings, he could spy no glimmer of light. All of a sudden a muffled, yet wild, howl wawled out of the house.

Monk had as yet no plan of action; yet upon action of some sort he was resolved; and hearing, as he now stood thinking how he was to act, a horse's neigh, he followed the sound, and came to an outhouse in an alder-spinney. This proved to be a stable, and there, against the door, stood a spade, a rake, and a crowbar.

Monk took the crowbar and returned to the house, where, after scrambling to the roof of a lean-to, he saw a crane projecting from the house, then found under it a shutter which was a slab of iron, and he set to work on this, the roar of the winds drowning the sounds of his fumbling. The roof, being slanting, and mossy, was slippery; but, lying along it, he managed presently to prise open the iron slab, which yielded with a pop, though, as it turned out, the wrench did not break the catch; and since the slab lacked a handle, when Monk had sprung into the apartment beyond, and when the wind slammed the slab, and the catch clicked, he realized that he was a prisoner.

Light though his leap was, it shook the house, which he felt shake throughout to each gust of the gale; and here, it was clear, was the home of old decay. As he stood there in a darkness that was complete, from somewhere far away there came to his ears a cry like the wail of one rived with pain; and when he struck a match, there, at his feet, kneeling with a face of fear, he saw a man, quite young, yet with white hair grown long, clad in the rags of a dressing-gown.

Having struck another match, Monk put his left hand on the lad's head, murmuring to him: "I am not going to hurt you; do I look, now, as if I would? Tell me who you are."

Nothing but a species of jabbering proceeded in answer out of the throat of the lad, who, opening his mouth wide, pointed inward to it.

"Ah!" . . . the lad had no tongue.

Monk kept on striking matches, examining that prostrate shape, examining the chamber.

He saw that there were two truckle-beds, from one of which the lad had apparently just risen, the other being "made": and at the foot of this other — chained to it — was a cash-box, which Monk was going to investigate when the lad held him back with a grip and gaze of warning — a gaze that all at once grew aghast at a sound of footsteps coming without. Quickly now Monk struck another match, hustled the lad into a large cupboard, with only one shelf, in a corner, locked the door upon him, kept the key; then, flying to the lad's bed, with that lightning knack of his so arranged the bed-clothes as to lend them an air of covering a slumberer. An instant later the key turned in a lock; there entered a very bulky man, bearing a candlestick with a tallow candle; and Monk, though he had purposely come to this house without a weapon, faced him.

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The man, dressed in a red shirt which bagged over his girdle, was evidently a servant, had an expression of dullness and grimness, a great fan-beard, and eyes nearly invisible beneath their lax lids, that resembled little draperies of skin. At sight of Monk his conduct was extraordinary. He simply dropped candlestick and candle, dashed to the cash-box, and, hugging it with both arms, began to bawl "Help!" But in one half-minute his mood of miserly affright changed to fury, and, bounding toward a stool, he caught and swung it to dash out Monk's brains; but Monk made a dodge as if to seize the cash-box, and the man, seeing this in the still-burning candlelight, bounded to intercept him; upon which Monk escaped out of the chamber.

Leaving the crowbar in a corner, and marking the spot in his mind, Monk darted onward, little knowing whither, through the most curious house which he had yet seen, where one chamber was higher or lower than the next by three or four steps, where nothing appeared quite straight, doors hung awry, floors lay aslant. He went butting into triangular rooms, antic nooks, whimsical corners, till, at last, seeing a blink of light ahead, he boldly moved toward it, opened a door, entered a room.

There hastened to meet him — a man; and both stood still, looking at each other.

The man — a powerful person of middle height — walked with a busy fling-out of the right leg, his left hand stuck in the pocket of a robe tied with a cord round the waist; he wore spectacles across his broad face, had a broad mouth, and an out-sticking beard, so hairy as to invade the fat of his cheeks.

At last he spoke, saying quite coolly: "What are you doing here?"

His speech was a species of rapid mutter, and even in the act of speaking, his tongue-tip was ever out, seeking for one end of his moustache to eat.

"Here to find a brother of mine," Monk answered.

"What name?"

"Never mind the name. The lad whose tongue you have cut out, Sir Saul Ingram."

Monk was standing with his palms pressed on a table, his back toward the one door, and the baronet, more remote from the door, was moving round toward it — a movement that Monk noticed, but made no attempt to stop. So now, with a sudden run, Ingram gained the door, closed it, locked it. He then stepped to a chest of drawers, got out of a drawer a revolver, turned upon his prisoner. At the same time there was a banging outside the door, and a mouth howling: "There is a mon in the house!"

"Yes, I know, go away," Ingram said to the door; and to Monk: "You are a fool. Woe to the conquered" — with the table between them.

"Going to shoot me?" asked Monk — "an unarmed and helpless man?"

"Fool," muttered Ingram; "what else than shoot you?"

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"I have help near; I defy you to shoot."

Ingram raised the weapon, finger on trigger.

All the house trembled with many a weary creak to the power of the storm, while some seconds passed, in which the baronet appeared to be enjoying a consciousness of power. The shot, however, was never fired: for there rang out a passionate shout — from outside the house, apparently — a cry in the night: "Arthur! expect us at two o'clock!": and it was the baronet who seemed shot — stepped backward, then rushed aimlessly to the door, aimlessly back again, in frank scare, realizing no doubt that, if Monk's presence in the house was known outside it, then Monk's death, and the manner of it, was a matter for reflection. But he was partially reassured by Monk himself, who said: "No, I have no help near; that shout came from *me*, and seemed to come from outside because I am the sort of man who can do such things. You couldn't shoot me, I think. Try again, and I have other ways of stopping you, some not so agreeable."

Ingram eyed him with a grim underlook, quite undecided now, no doubt, as Monk wished him to be, whether the cry had or had not come from outside; and he probably resolved to wait till "two," the hour mentioned by the voice.

At this point a rap sounded on the locked door, and when Ingram opened it, there slouched in the man in the red shirt whom Monk had encountered before, bearing dishes on both palms, and followed by a tall woman, white-faced, gaunt, her gown black, who bore on a tray a bottle, a plate, a tablecloth. The man took not the slightest notice of Monk, but the woman eyed him with a look of rancour. No one spoke. The woman spread the table, the man put on the dishes. But as she turned to go, the woman, holding up a finger, said to Ingram: "Saul, give heed! Danger this night!"

The baronet made no answer, locked the door after them, and sat to a repast of potatoes, boiled cod, black bread, whisky; and he set to eating with a certain earnestness, and to drinking.

After some minutes he glanced up at Monk, who stood regarding him with folded arms, and said: "Sit, if you like."

Monk sat by the table, watching the feast, watching the revolver on the table, watching the gulps of whisky. At last, yielding perhaps to the garrulous influence of the drink, Ingram suddenly said: "Foolish man! What is it all about?"

And Monk: "I found out that you were up to some mischief, and came to stop you."

"Mischief? Know what I am?"

"No, tell me."

"The only exact biologist in the world."

"Oh, come, the only one?"

"See those three books there? In manuscript. Secret of genesis of life in them."

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"Truly? And by what methods ——?"

"Only one way — human vivisection."

"By Jove!"

Something here new to Monk; and he gazed with something resembling reverence at that plump face, as Ingram drained yet a glass, saying: "The dumb fellow you saw — young parson from Cambridge — am driving mad for brain. Doctors say, you know, they can discover no morbid anatomy in mad brains. No morbid anatomy! Ha, God!"

Ingram grinned to himself at this.

"So how do you drive people mad?" Monk asked.

"Fear, torture, horror, other things; have snakes, a jaguar, a monster grouse with four legs; simply solitary confinement sometimes. Depends on diathesis of subject."

"Well, you are candid enough," from Monk: "how if friends are really coming to rescue me at two? I'll naturally repeat all this."

"No, you won't, friends or no friends. Suppose I wanted to hide you — alive — I could. Why, I have seventeen people here now, undergoing preparations, and you might search, you wouldn't find. Minds like mine are trained to ingenuity, eh?"

"I should call out, of course."

"You wouldn't. I could have you dumb in three minutes. But you won't be here to call out — going into a packing-case with gun-cotton and a time-fuse for first goods-train; thirty miles from Stratton Eastern scarcely a trace left of you."

"Even so, you won't escape the law," Monk remarked, "for one of my friends knows of the presence here of the dumb lad, who will be looked for, and undoubtedly found."

Ingram reflected, nodded, said: "You may be right there. I'd better examine his brain now instead of next week; and his body shall go with yours to the railway."

"But tell me one thing," Monk now said: "since science is your motive, how comes it that your name figures in insurance policies?"

Ingram at this glanced up angrily, stung in his honour, crying, "What! You know of that? And do you suppose that the motives of a man like me could be tainted in that way? Why, I live on sixpence a day! — except the whisky. Sometimes I do take out a policy on a patient, but not for myself! I have two misers in the house — Hubert and my sister — they get the money. That man Hubert — miserly — mad! Thinks I am for ever on the look-out to steal the money I have given! Sleeps with fellow without tongue and nobody dare approach room: once wanted to kill me — mad."

"I see," said Monk: "Whisky is golden, but silence is more so. Doesn't it occur to you, Ingram, that with all this knowledge that you have given me I can snuff you out in five or six different ways?"

The baronet took this coolly. As the rude repast ended, a clock struck midnight.

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"Hubert!" presently roared the baronet, at the same time clattering a hand-bell, and when Hubert came slouching in, said to him, "Look in the dissecting-room closet, and carry one of those three packing-cases to your room. Wilson and this man will have to go into it, and you have to take them to the station at five in the morning. Understand?"

Hubert grumbled something.

"And don't go holding matches and things over the packing-case, now," Ingram added with a grim smile: "gun-cotton in it."

Hubert grunted, but did not move.

"Well, why don't you go?" Ingram asked.

"Why must the box be e'en stowed in *my* room?" — from Hubert.

"Oh, go away, you, do what I tell you!" said the baronet. "Who wants to steal your daft money? I'm not even going to enter your room. Isn't that the only room with a crane to lower the packing-case?"

Hubert, reassured, grumbled something, and went out. And now Ingram at once began to make preparations for the operation on the brain, taking two instrument-cases from a bureau, examining sphygmograph, microtome, forceps, scalpels, trephine, one by one, over the lamp, and laying them out on a window-seat, the scalpels wrapped in chamois. The baronet had laid down the instruments on the window-seat, when a white face with malign eyes peeped in, saying: "Saul, I would have speech with you."

The baronet stalked to her, and, while they stood talking a little outside the door, Monk stole close and hearkened.

"Saul," the woman said, "it is not well this night, I'm doubting. I have heard your talk with yon callant ——"

"Well, what's the matter now, Elspeth?" — the baronet was impatient.

"Are you minded to make any more operations on Wilson to-night, Saul?" she asked: "no, don't do it, it is a long work, you will not have the time."

"I am busy — what is it you want with me?" — from the baronet.

"End Wilson at once, Saul," she answered, "and yon callant, too, and put them both into the box for the station: for I feel a fright on me. You know not what aid this man may ha' outside; and here is Hubert threeping that one of the snakes has escaped, and I near fainting with fright ——"

Monk stopped to listen to no more, flew lightly round the shelves, searching till he found a bottle marked "Phosphorus," which contained some waxy, semi-transparent sticks in water. From this he took out one of the sticks, wetting his fingers well, so that their warmth should not cause the phosphorus to flame; and now, running to the window-seat, he took one of the scalpels there out of its chamois wrapping, made the leather damp to keep it cold a little, and then, putting the stick of phosphorus with the scalpel, wrapped them up. He had put back the bottle in its place when the baronet came in again, stalked to the window, hurriedly put his tools into an outer pocket of his robe, phos-

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phorus and all, and called out "Hubert!"

"Look you," said Monk, now frowning balefully, "let me save you some trouble, sir. You are calling this Hubert, I think, to tell him to take Wilson to your operating table. Well, but Wilson is gone — has escaped ——"

Ingram turned white.

"*I* set him at liberty," Monk added.

At those words the baronet flew. To this moment the disappearance of Wilson had not been discovered, probably owing to Monk's life-like placing of the bed-clothes when he had locked him away in the cupboard. At any rate, so intense was the baronet's scare at this ugly news, that, in flying out, he even forgot to lock Monk in — only for one instant, though, for back he flew, transferred the key to the outside, turned it, then was off anew, making for Wilson's chamber — which was Hubert's, too; and he was just off when Hubert, in answer to his summons, came, rapped, turned the key, entered, and was looking round for the baronet, when Monk, bursting into laughter, said: "What, looking for the master? Gone out. Well, you can guess — called you to get you out of the way while he went to your room — in want of a little cash to-night to buy my silence. Take my advice: lie low — say nothing."

The man's face passed through all the expressions of disbelief, belief, rage, lunacy; and suddenly, casting up his arms, he fled; but after one moment's forgetfulness, he, too, darted back to the key, turned it, and was away again.

Monk, then, was still a prisoner; but he now no sooner found himself alone than he began to shout, in a perfect imitation of Ingram's voice: "Hi! Elspeth!", and when in a minute the baronet's sister turned the handle, then the key, peeped in, looking for her brother, Monk, bowing, said to her: "The baronet has just left the room, madam. I see that he is in a great hurry to make his experiment on that Wilson, and is now gone to get all ready; but, hurry as he may, I tell you that he will hardly have time. Look you, will you make a bargain with me?"

"Well?" asked Elspeth.

"Madam," said Monk, "I stand this night in peril; but so do you: and if I show you how to save yourself, will *you* save *me?* A bargain?"

"Ye-es," said the woman.

"Well, in one half-hour others from outside will be here — I know it — and as they have reason to believe that Wilson is here, the only hope for you really is to have Wilson out of the house in the packing-case before they come; and since the baronet is bent upon his experiment, your one chance is to end this Wilson with your own hands — this moment — as he lies a-bed, before the baronet can get him for the experiment: for the baronet has no use for the dead body, it is the living brain that he is after. So now I have told you the facts: will you save my life in return?"

"We must see," she answered, with her twitching eyes of craft — seeing

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fully the force of Monk's remarks, and at once, making up her mind, she turned to the bureau to unlock a drawer by one of the bundle of keys at her girdle, and to draw forth a horn-handled knife, her purpose, as Monk knew, being to spring first upon and stab *him*, before hurrying to the dumb lad's bed. But while she was still stooping over the bureau, Monk had caught up Ingram's water-jug, and, hiding it behind his back, had looked down at the floor, which he found to slant, like most of the floors: and, as the woman was raising herself to turn upon him, he hissed: "A snake!"

When she stared with panic where he pointed, her glance saw in the room's gloom a wiry form gliding over the floor toward her — a snake created by Monk, who, having heard her say that one of the baronet's snakes had escaped, had now, out of the water-bottle, poured an undulating rivulet over the floor. The woman was gone headlong, leaving the door open, Monk after her, tracking the sound of her footfalls, himself all unmarked, through the intricacies of the house, toward Wilson's room.

The situation at that moment in that room Monk declares that he knew with precision, as though he saw it. He had sent the baronet to find Wilson, and the miser, Hubert, to find the baronet: now, he was convinced that Ingram had a real fear of the miser's growls and furies, and he knew that no sooner would Ingram have discovered the absence of Wilson than he would hear the oncoming of the wrath of Hubert; upon which it was certain that the baronet, to avoid a scene, or something worse, would wish to secrete himself. But there was no hiding-place in that room, save two — the cupboard and the bed-clothes of Wilson's truckle-bed. The cupboard, containing Wilson, Monk had locked: so, Ingram, knowing that Hubert was still ignorant of Wilson's disappearance, would scuttle beneath Wilson's bed-clothes, and pretend to be Wilson asleep. And Monk had now prompted Elspeth to kill Wilson in his bed; provided she did which quickly, she would kill her brother.

Something more or less corresponding to these calculations must really have taken place. Hubert, on entering Wilson's room, must have struck a match, peered round, seen no baronet there, and now, perhaps, was about to go out again, when he must have heard footsteps — Elspeth coming to "end" Wilson; on which the miser's suspicions must at once have leapt up afresh, and he must have crouched somewhere in the dark to watch what would take place. Elspeth then went in, Monk by that time being close behind her, though, before he could reach the door, she had shut and secured it; and he stood listening outside. And now the woman, moving no doubt on hands and knees, steel in hand in the rayless dark, crawled for the bed on which lay her brother, for suddenly — short, but raucous — Monk heard the outburst of a shout.

At this outcry of the baronet, Hu-

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bert must have addressed Elspeth: for presently Monk heard her explaining her motive for disposing at once of the dumb lad; then a match was struck within; but, as they had no candle, and the baronet's face must have been covered, he was not apparently recognised; there followed a noise of shuffling feet when the body was being raised and placed in the packing-case waiting there to receive Wilson; and as the garment worn by Wilson was of the same sort as Ingram's, no suspicion of the truth could have occurred to the criminals, who would strike no matches over the gun-cotton in that box. Monk heard the drop of the lid over the deposited body, and the woman's question: "Has it a lock?"

And now he knew that there was need for haste. In the box was gun-cotton, and in the baronet's pocket phosphorus, for Monk, who could be ruthless, had doomed all the three. That phosphorus must quickly fire at the warmth of a body still warm packed into a closed box, the moistened chamois round it now dry or drying. Now, therefore, Monk darted to the spot where he had deposited the crowbar, then back to the room, outside which, at about the spot where the cupboard which contained Wilson stood, he began to dig at the boarding, Elspeth and Hubert within hearkening in a paralysis of awe apparently to those strokes of the crowbar while on he toiled in the momentary expectancy of death; till at last the oak was crackling, a plank splintered, another, and an opening was there. Now Monk felt the contact of chilly flesh, dragged the lad out, tossed the meagre form over his shoulders, and, as though the fiend was after him, went flying, with many a blind stumble and fumble; till, spying a gleam like moonshine through a crack, he again and again drove his back against some boarding, tumbled outward, and down, fifteen feet, and was rolling downhill in bracken.

Then, catching up Wilson afresh, Monk made paces from the house, but had hardly run thirty yards when behind him a rumpus like the bursting of some tremendous drum had the earth atremble, and glancing backward, he saw a swarm of débris flying, like startled grouse in the midst of a spout of glare. Then followed three more brisk bangs: and the explosion, which was local to Wilson's room, was over. But some instinct of general ruin held Monk rooted where he stood during two minutes of dreadful expectation; at the end of which, a ponderous cake of masonry tumbled outward in a smoke of dust, and from the interior there pealed forth, joined in one choir, a shriek of voices: and in some moments the whole hotch-potch of the house nodded, shouted, and rushed to ruin.

Day was breaking when Monk reached Stratton Eastern with his dumb friend, and I saw him again three days later.

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The reaction of most readers to their first O'Malley story is usually something like this: Why, it's so simple I could write it myself! True, Mr. MacHarg rarely uses a long or unfamiliar word — his O'Malley tales are almost object lessons in Basic English; and the sentence structure is simplicity itself. But don't be deceived: the easier it is to read a story, the harder the story is to write, and many a professional author would give his left eye to write with really polished simplicity.

What, then, makes the O'Malley stories grow on you? What do you see in the second half-dozen stories that you somehow failed to see in the first half-dozen? What makes the affairs of O'Malley get under your skin? The answer is obvious once it hits you: the simple, natural, completely unaffected style is as close an approach to true realism as is possible in this genre — truer realism in many respects than the fast and furious hard-boileders produce. And true realism sinks in, it gets inside of you.

Don't make any mistake about the O'Malley shorts: they're not soft. They're tough and terse and muscular, and they focus a policeman's lot with the photographic clarity of a literary candid-camera.

BROADWAY MURDER

by WILLIAM MacHARG

"We got a Broadway killing," O'Malley said. "You either solve these night-people cases right away or you have a tough time cracking 'em. This looks to be a easy one. A guy that called himself Norden got bumped off in a car on East River Drive. Cops knew him to be a member of a mob that hung out around hotels and cafés and got money out of strangers — con guys. He had been shot and the gun was in the car. Witnesses had seen him get in the car that night with someone that answered the description of a guy from Rochester named Dennin. So they pinched Dennin."

"How did they find him?" I asked.

"Cops knew where he was. They just went to his hotel and picked him up. It turned out the gun was Dennin's, so it looks like there ain't nothing to the case, but I got orders I'm to check on it."

O'Malley had a record of the arrest. It said Dennin was twenty-six years old. He was a buyer of sports goods for a department store in Rochester and came frequently to New York. We went to see him. They had him at headquarters.

"He has got visitors," a desk officer informed us.

"Yeah. Who?"

"They claim they're his parents."

We went in anyway. I thought

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Dennin was good-looking. An elderly man and sweet-faced woman were talking with him. There was a girl about twenty years old there too. Her name was Miss Ende. They had traveling bags that showed they had come from Rochester and hadn't yet gone to a hotel, and the women were crying.

"I guess you been telling these people how it come about that you knocked that guy off," O'Malley said to Dennin.

"He didn't do it!" Mrs. Dennin declared.

"Lady, he'd say that anyway."

"No," Dennin said nervously, "I didn't do it. I just have been foolish. I met that man at my hotel. He didn't call himself Norden; he called himself Bufort. We got acquainted and went around several evenings together. He said he was a big businessman, and he kept talking about some stock he had that belonged to a woman who wanted to sell it but didn't want her husband to know, and he was afraid if he sold it through a broker her husband would find out. It was stock in a company I knew the name of and knew was all right. He said the woman would take a good deal less than it was worth if she was sure no one would know. I had three thousand dollars I'd saved up because I was expecting to get married."

"Yeah? To this lady here?"

"Yes," the girl said.

"So what?"

"Well, I bought the stock. When I got back to Rochester I showed it to a banker and he said the company had been reorganized and this was the old stock and it wasn't worth anything. So I complained to the New York police and they said that kind of man went by a lot of different names and they couldn't recognize him from my description. This time when I came to New York I decided to look for the man myself."

"So you came packing a gun."

"Yes; I brought a revolver, but I didn't intend to shoot anybody. The police hadn't found out anything, so I went around looking for him. I went around several evenings to all the places I'd been with him and to a lot of other places. Last night I saw him. He came out of a restaurant and got into a car and I was right behind him and got into the car with him. I told him the stock was no good and I wanted my money back and he kept arguing that the stock was all right. It was after midnight and we had got to the East Side and I didn't see any people around. So then I took out the gun. I told him he didn't know what kind of person he was dealing with and I was going to get my money back.

"Of course I didn't have any intention of shooting him. Well, he probably realized that, because he grabbed the gun away from me and made me get out of the car. I couldn't see any policeman and I was kind of ashamed about it. I hadn't learned any more about the man than I'd already told the police, and I hadn't got the number of the car, and I decided I'd wait till morning and then

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tell it to the police officer I'd talked with before. In the morning two detectives came to the hotel and arrested me and when I tried to tell them how it was they laughed at me."

"You believe that guy's story?" O'Malley asked me when we had got outside.

"No," I said. "I'm sorry. If it were the way he tells it, he would have gone straight to the police. Going back to his hotel convicts him. His story may be true up to the point where Norden tried to grab the gun, but I can't believe, when that happened, Dennin didn't pull the trigger."

"Sure. Everybody thinks that. Well, now, it's funny. A cop ain't supposed to believe nobody and I don't believe as much as other cops. We got all a lawyer needs to prove a murder case — motive and opportunity. Still, I believe the kid, but I guess I am the only guy that will. It might be there's something wrong with me. I thought this one was a easy case, but now it turns into a hard one. Well, we'll see what we can do with it."

We saw the mobsters. They had them at the station house — a man who called himself Craig and another named Pailey and another named Press. They weren't under arrest, but had been brought in for questioning. They all were barbered and manicured and carefully dressed and police questioning didn't bother them — they acted as if they might have been through it before.

"How was this about this fellow Norden?" O'Malley asked them.

"Well, he got shot."

"Gee, you don't tell me! Who done it?"

"It was a piece of Norden's private business. We had nothing to do with it."

We saw the car. There was no doubt Norden had been killed in it. There was plenty of blood.

"Anything but the gun in this bus?" O'Malley asked the cop that showed it to us.

"They found some fingerprints — Norden's and the fellow's from Rochester. A lady was in the car sometime. They found her fingerprints too."

"What lady?"

"We got nothing on that. She hasn't got a police record."

We saw the dead man. He was big and fine-looking, which must have helped in his business. He had been expensively dressed. Only ordinary things were in his pockets. One was a book of matches. The match book said, "Thoroughbred Grill. Mike is Your Friend."

"Who's Mike?" I asked O'Malley.

"I'd figure he runs that grill. He would be the kind of friend people have on Broadway. That means it don't mean nothing. I guess we got to see what reports been turned in on this case."

We read the reports. They had them at homicide headquarters.

"Well," O'Malley said, "this case is this way: There weren't any fingerprints on that gun — we don't find

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'em sometimes even if they ain't been wiped off. We know it's the right gun because laboratory cops fired bullets from it and checked up the markings on 'em with the bullet that killed Norden. The car didn't belong to Norden; the license plates show it was registered to a lady named Miss Verney. That ain't nothing remarkable because mobsters don't like to use a car that's registered in their name, so pretty often they register 'em in the name of some lady friend.

"Them police reports say Miss Verney is a friend of that guy Press. Maybe all of them mobsters used that car. Some lady left her fingerprints in the bus, but they ain't Miss Verney's because she had been in trouble one time and cops have her fingerprints and the two don't match. We don't know whose, and if we did it probably wouldn't get us anywhere, because the prints might have been made any time and wouldn't have nothing to do with the murder. Dennin didn't say nothing about a lady. Still, it sticks in my head there are women in this business somewhere."

"What are you going to do?"

"Why, I got no program. If women were in this, they would be Broadway ladies. It's harder to get information out of them than out of men, and I ain't had the experience I need with that kind of people. I'm like a babe in the woods when I'm on that thoroughfare."

"Some babe!" I said, "and some woods!"

Next day I lost track of O'Malley. I called up several precinct stations and a lot of other places and I went looking for him wherever I thought that he might be. I couldn't learn anything. He couldn't be taking a vacation or he would have told me. In about a week, after the theater, I was walking on Broadway and I saw a sign that said "Thoroughbred Grill," so I went in to see what the place was like. A stuffed race horse was just inside the door and there were pictures of horses all over the walls and a big man, who must have been Mike, was walking around among the tables greeting the diners. I ordered chili con carne. I didn't look at the waiter.

"If you eat much of that stuff," the waiter said, "you won't have no stomach left."

The waiter was O'Malley.

"Have you been learning anything?" I asked.

"I learned a waiter makes better money than a cop."

It was a pretty big place and was well filled with men and women and most of the women were young. I wondered if one of them was Miss Verney. There was a redhead at the next table that I thought might be she, and an exceedingly pretty blonde at another table, and a black-haired girl at still another. I watched O'Malley, but I didn't find out anything. He acted just like any other waiter.

He phoned me next morning:

"Listen! Something might happen at headquarters this afternoon."

I went to headquarters. They had about a dozen women there and an

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nspector was questioning them. The redhead and the blonde and the black-haired girl were there and others I hadn't seen. One was a very pretty woman who wore a lot of jewelry. She had on a mink coat. I was surprised because they were questioning the women in a group instead of separately, as the police usually do. The inspector was asking them only routine questions: Had they known Norden? Did they know anything about the murder? Then he questioned the woman in the mink coat.

"Did you know Norden?"

"I'd met him."

"How about Press and Craig?"

"I'd met them. I never had much to do with them. I didn't want to know them but they came to my apartment sometimes."

"You didn't want to know them but they came to your apartment? How was that?"

"Do I have to answer?"

"No, lady," O'Malley told her, "but if you don't answer we'll lock you up."

"Well, I couldn't help receiving them because Mr. Pailey brought them."

"Does that mean that Pailey was paying the rent of your apartment?"

"He was."

"Did he buy you those rings?"

"He did."

"How about the coat?"

"Yes."

"Did you ever hear any of them say anything about this murder?"

"I didn't."

"Well, O'Malley," I whispered, "you're not getting much out of these women."

"Boy, not a thing!"

I couldn't find O'Malley after the questioning, so I left. Next morning's newspaper said Pailey had been arrested for the murder. I found O'Malley. I came at a bad time because Mr. and Mrs. Dennin were with him and his face was red because Mrs. Dennin had just kissed him.

"Tell me about this," I demanded.

"Why, go read your newspaper! Say, let's get out of here! The newspaper's got how it was. Pailey killed Norden because Norden had been two-timing the other members of the mob. Pailey and Press and Craig had been suspicious quite a while that Norden was holding money out on them, and they told him if they found out he was they'd knock him off.

"The night Norden got killed he was on his way to meet Pailey and a lady named Eva Rand at the Rand dame's apartment. She is that pretty black-haired kid you seen when we was questioning them women at headquarters. Well, everything in the car happened the way Dennin told it. After Norden had took the gun away from Dennin he went and picked up Pailey and the Eva dame like he had intended, because they were going to an all-night joint out on Long Island, and they asked him what made him late. Norden was all cocky and proud of himself for the way he had got rid of Dennin and he couldn't

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resist telling 'em about it, and he showed 'em the gun. Well, he told too much. Pailey guessed the trouble had been about money Norden had got from Dennin that he hadn't split with the mob, and the way Norden acted made him sure of it. Then Pailey seen how events had fixed themselves up so that he could knock Norden off without danger to himself. Here was a gun that belonged to somebody else, and nobody had seen Pailey and Miss Rand get into the car.

"Pailey and the girl was in the back seat and Norden was driving. When they got to a place where there was nobody around he asked to look at the gun. After he'd shot Norden, Miss Rand got out of the car and Pailey drove it to the East Side where Norden had had his trouble with Dennin. He wiped his fingerprints off the gun and put the gun in the car. He didn't do nothing to the front part of the car where Dennin and Norden had been, but he wiped off everything in the back seat that him or Miss Rand had touched. It was just luck he missed one fingerprint. Miss Rand had opened a window and she touched the glass. Pailey didn't think to raise the window again and wipe it off."

"All right!" I said. "But there wasn't any indication of Pailey or anybody except Dennin in the case, unless you held out a lot of information on me."

"No; you seen all that was done. This was a case where we didn't have much to start from. A cop that has what looks like nothing just has to start from what he has. So I figured I'd work from the fingerprint, and if it didn't lead nowhere I might turn up something else while I was doing it. I had no idea who the lady might be, because it was that Miss Verney's car and all them mobsters used it, and they knew too many ladies. I hadn't no doubt she was some Broadway lady and I got what information I could about what dames they went with, but there were a lot of 'em and a cop can't go round fingerprinting ladies without they're willing. So the idea come to me I'd be a waiter. A waiter hears a lot."

"I saw you being a waiter," I said, "but I saw nothing else."

"You're pretty dumb! You didn't notice what I was doing with the glasses? Whenever I waited on some lady I thought might be the one, I picked up the glass she had been using without touching it outside, and I saved it and sent it to the bureau of identification. If I could find out her name I put a piece of paper in the glass with the name on it, and if I couldn't get her name I wrote a description of her on the paper. I sent over a hundred glasses to them identification cops before they found one that had the same fingerprints on it that was in the car, and them prints belonged to that Eva Rand, and I found out that she was Pailey's woman.

"Well, what to do then? Maybe she didn't know anything about the murder, but it was necessary to find out if she did. I figured it wouldn't

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o no good to question her. Mobsters ell their women more than they tell nybody else, but whatever guy said woman can't keep a secret didn't now mobsters' ladies.

"Well, the best reason a lady tells omething is because she is sore at a uy and wants to get square with im, and the thing that makes dames ke that Rand kid sorest of all is to ind out that her guy has been spend- ng more money on some other woman han he does on her.

"So then I thought up that game ou seen us work at headquarters. We ot Eva Rand and about a dozen ther women in for questioning, and ne of 'em was a dame in a mink coat hat none of the rest of 'em knew. She was a cop. She testified Pailey paid her rent and had bought her her jewelry and her coat. I was waiting for the Rand kid after the questioning, and when she come out she was so sore she couldn't hardly speak. To get square with Pailey she blew up and told me everything, and she knew more than I had even hoped. She told how this case was and I got her to put it down in writing, and now we have her as a eyewitness that she seen Pailey knock Norden off."

"A fine piece of work!" I declared.

"Sure. Well, it might change me from being a cop into being a waiter. If a guy slips a cop a ten-dollar bill they call it a bribe, but a waiter just takes it and says, 'Thank you.'"

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BEGINNING A NEW SERIES

The name of Jack Moffitt may seem strangely familiar to you. Perhaps you'll recall Mr. Moffitt as the collaborator with Sinclair Lewis on the Federal Theatre dramatization of Mr. Lewis's IT CAN'T HAPPEN HERE. *More likely you'll remember seeing the name of Jack Moffitt on the screen. As a Hollywood scenario writer, he has worked on screenplays for Bing Crosby, Hedy Lamarr, Humphrey Bogart, Fred MacMurray, Dorothy Lamour, Bob Burns, and other Paramount and Warner Brothers stars.*

Well, Jack Moffitt has come through with one of the most engaging literary ideas ever submitted to your astonished Editor. He has taken one of the greatest short stories of all time, Guy de Maupassant's "The Necklace," and written a sequel to it — a criminous sequel!

The idea of one author writing an afterpiece to another author's story is not new to literature. This unusual type of delayed collaboration has occurred quite often. For example, two of Robert Louis Stevenson's famous books have inspired sequels: Arthur D. Howden Smith's ALAN BRECK AGAIN *is a full-length postscript to Stevenson's* KIDNAPPED; *and H. A. Calahan's* BACK TO TREASURE ISLAND *is exactly what the title says. Two Mark Twain masterpieces have had excellent sequels:* TOM SAWYER GROWS UP *and* MORE ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN, *both written by Clement Wood. H. Bedford Jones has invented several sequels to Alexandre Dumas's* THE THREE MUSKETEERS, *and if memory serves, Tiffany Thayer has also contrived a full-length epilogue to the same story.*

In the field of the detective-crime novel there have also been official and unofficial continuations. Barry Perowne has carried on the Raffles legend by writing many successors to the original E. W. Hornung tales. And Fortuné du Boisgobey, one of the "forgotten" early French masters, wrote a sequel to the Gaboriau series which he called THE OLD AGE OF MONSIEUR LECOQ.

But all these examples, you will note, are novels or novelettes. To the best of your Editor's memory, no one has followed up a short story with another short story. So, while Mr. Moffitt's basic conception is in the accepted tradition of the past, he has added the refreshing novelty of sequel-by-short-story. And so refreshing do we find Mr. Moffitt's approach that we have asked him to make his "The Necklace" the first of a series of sequels. It will be interesting to see what Mr. Moffitt can do to solve the

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sixty-two-year-old dilemma in Frank R. Stockton's "The Lady, or the Tiger?" Can Mr. Moffitt also devise a really satisfying explanation to the fifty-year-old riddle in Cleveland Moffett's "The Mysterious Card"?

In the meantime whet your appetite for coming continuations by enjoying the rich and rewarding experience of "finishing" de Maupassant's classic tale of "The Necklace."

THE NECKLACE

(A Sequel to de Maupassant's *The Necklace*)

by JACK MOFFITT

WOMEN live in a secret world. They will share their beds much more readily than their thoughts. A husband may know every contour of his wife's body and still be ignorant of what goes on in her mind. Sometimes a great emotional climax breaks down this barricade and a man who has lived with the most commonplace of females finds himself shocked as he looks across the spiritual wreckage at things that are both terrifying and inspired.

I am thinking of the case of Mathilde Loisel. Her story has waited a century to be told. De Maupassant told half of it in his little masterpiece called *The Necklace*. But there was a second half that stemmed from the first.

It is this that I propose to tell you. I found the story among the memoirs of a long dead priest. He had been Madame Loisel's confessor — and it is certain that he enjoyed the confidence of the Paris police officers who were assigned to the Loisel case. By means of a curious collaboration, in which they considered both criminal and spiritual clues, they seem to have arrived at a solution which had its overtones of disconcerting human truth.

As you undoubtedly remember, de Maupassant tells of a pretty and vain young woman, Madame Loisel, who borrowed a diamond necklace to wear to a ball. On the way home, she lost it. The author goes on to explain how she returned a duplicate of the lost piece of jewelry and to describe the miserable ten years of poverty and drudgery by which she and her husband, a small-salaried clerk, managed to pay for it. Then, after the struggle was over, Madame Loisel saw the woman from whom she had borrowed the necklace walking in the Champs Élysées on a Sunday afternoon. Her name was Madame Jeanne Forestier and, except for the child by her side, the years had brought few changes to this prosperous matron. The unfortunate Madame Loisel went up to her.

De Maupassant brings his narrative to its dénouement as his heroine says:

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"Good day, Jeanne."

The other, astonished to be so familiarly accosted by this plain good wife, did not recognize her at all and stammered: "But, madame! — I do not know — you must have made a mistake."

"No. I am Mathilde Loisel."

Her friend gave a cry. "Oh, my poor Mathilde! How you have changed."

"Yes, I have had a pretty hard life since I last saw you, days wretched enough. And that because of you."

"Of me! How so?"

"Do you remember that necklace of diamonds you let me wear at the ministerial ball?"

"Yes. Well?"

"Well, I lost it."

"What do you mean? You brought it back."

"I brought you back another just like it. And we have been ten years paying for it. You can understand that it was not very easy for us, for us who had nothing. At last it is over, and I am very glad."

Madame Forestier had stopped.

"You say that you bought a necklace of diamonds to replace mine?"

"Yes. You never noticed them! They were very similar."

Madame Forestier, deeply agitated, took both her hands.

"Oh, my poor Mathilde! Why, my necklace was paste! It was worth at the most five hundred francs."

That is where de Maupassant ends his narrative. But life cannot conclude with a paragraph. Ten minutes after the tragic revelation, Madame Forestier had called her carriage and the horses were drawing them smartly through the shaded elegance of the Champs Élysées. Jeanne was crying. She kept exclaiming piteously over the tragedy of Mathilde's wasted ten years.

Mathilde said nothing. She sat with her big hands limp in her lap and her eyes expressionless.

What could this flighty woman with her ostrich feathers and her smell of mignonette know of toil and poverty? Her words lacked meaning.

Jeanne's child sat silently in a corner of the carriage. Her little feet did not touch the floor. Her soft eyes regarded Mathilde with uncomprehending awe; as though she were rendering homage to the heroine of some grown-up play — a play she found impressive but whose plot she did not understand.

Without realizing it, Mathilde responded to the look of the child. It gave her a certain pleasure. She had not been the center of admiring attention for such a long time. Not since the night of the ministerial ball — when her husband had dozed, with other unimportant guests, in an anteroom while she danced until four in the morning with fashionable young men.

When they reached the home of the Forestiers, this sense of pleasure increased. Madame Forestier was so full of what had happened that she started blurting out the story to the

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old man-servant who opened the door. She told more of it to the maid as she took their wraps. Both servants followed them up the stairs.

Jeanne's husband was dozing in a worn silk chair, as they entered the boudoir sitting room. He removed a silk handkerchief from his face and arose to blink at his wife as she crossed to the wardrobe with a rustle of flounces and opened the mirrored door. He yawned as though expecting neither his wife's chatter nor her guest to be very interesting. Mathilde felt herself a nobody in his presence. A high bald brow and a magnificent yellow beard gave him a Jovian appearance. The newspapers sometimes mentioned him as one of the court physicians.

He listened owlishly as Madame Forestier brought out her jewel box and unlocked it. Mathilde did not see the pearls which she had been tempted to borrow on that momentous visit ten years before. But some new trinkets had been added and the Venetian cross of intricate workmanship still was there. It now occurred to Mathilde to wonder if these treasures were artificial, too.

But such doubts were forgotten when Madame Forestier reached into the bottom of her coffer and brought out the black satin necklace case. It was worn. Its stitches were broken and from beneath the ruined fabric, a soiled white showed through — like sickly flesh within a ruined stocking. It was a miserable container for a fortune. Mathilde found herself choking with disappointment.

But her breath came quicker and her heart pounded noisily when Madame Forestier snapped the catch and the frayed lid sprang back, revealing the glittering necklace.

How bright they were! How dazzling! Thirty-six thousand francs' worth of brilliant luxury. How could the Forestiers ever have mistaken them for imitations? How pure and stainless they were! Unsmirched by the ten years of filth and poverty that had paid for them.

Mathilde held her breath like a stalking animal. She scarcely dared look at her host and hostess. She must not communicate her anxiety. This was the critical moment.

Would the necklace be returned to her? If the Forestiers refused to surrender it, how could she prove it was hers? Ten years of haggling economy had left her suspicious of everyone. These people were supposed to be rich, but the threadbare upholstery of their fashionable furniture was in a suspicious contrast to their carriage and their clothing. They might be keeping up appearances. Anyway, no one was ever too rich to stop loving money. In her ten years of poverty, Mathilde had yet to meet a generous landlord or an open-handed shopkeeper. No one gave anything away.

Of course Mathilde now had witnesses. When Jeanne had chattered, like a fool, in front of the servants, it had seemed to be too good to be true. Yet servants are at the mercy of their masters. They can be bribed

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or intimidated. And, if their masters are politically prominent, the police are willing to dismiss their testimony as malicious tale-bearing. Most of Dr. Forestier's patients had positions in the government.

Mathilde glanced at him from the corners of wary eyes. He was eyeing the necklace as though he never had seen it before. One large pink hand clutched his yellow beard — paralyzed in the midst of a stately gesture. He seemed both thinking and listening, making a befuddled effort to force the sleep from his eyes. He wheezed. His whole being appeared to be struggling with some idea too startling to be readily absorbed.

Then his wife laughed and placed the jewel case in Mathilde's hands.

"This now belongs to you, my dear."

Mathilde couldn't smile. She wasn't sure yet. It had been too easy. She turned her full shrewd look on the woman's husband.

He failed to meet her eyes. His gaze was fixed enigmatically on the servants who loitered breathlessly by the door. For this domestic drama, they were an avid audience.

Benevolent wrinkles appeared at the corners of Dr. Forestier's eyes. A smile bloomed in the depths of the yellow beard.

"Of course the necklace belongs to you, Madame Loisel," he said. "There can be no question about it."

Ten years before, when her imagination glamorized such gentle folk, she would have taken his graciousness for granted. But now she found it un natural. She heard herself sobbin most unpleasantly and she wishe that she could stop. She wanted t take this treasure of hers and run ou of the house.

It was hers. She wanted to be alon with it.

But she was afraid.

After ten years, Mathilde's husban still was an unimportant little clerk He had achieved three promotion during the interval of struggle, eac with its infinitesimal salary increas His insignificance was, perhaps, fo tunate. Had he been more importan he never would have survived th shifting tides of politics at the Min istry of Public Instruction where h was employed.

As it was, he had become a respecte fixture in that gray world of copyis wherein distinction is won by th mastery of petty routine and whe valor consists of a patient and un complaining ability to hang on.

And he was not unhappy. On th contrary, he felt a tremendous sens of accomplishment over having, se eral months before, repaid the las loan necessitated by the necklac catastrophe — down to the final frac tion of compound interest. He re garded himself as a man of ampl proven honor. And he looked bac on the enormity of his debt with th same pride which misers reserve fo their savings.

At first this triumph was accom panied by a sort of purposeless be

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vilderment. During the years of unemitting industry, he had lost all bility to enjoy leisure. Indeed, his bleak surroundings made work a blessng which permitted squalor to be gnored.

So Monsieur Loisel set for himself new ambition. If he and his good vife continued to work and economize hey might, within the not too distant uture, return to such an attractive partment as they, during their early vedded years, had occupied in the Rue des Martyrs. Everything, or nearly everything, might be as it once vas.

And so, on that fateful Sunday ıfternoon, he was alone in his garret, ɔent over the rickety table, still intent ɔn making extra money by copying nanuscripts for five sous a page — ınd smiling at his work.

He was aroused from his happy nusings by the soup kettle.' After simmering all afternoon, it had suddenly come to a boil. Sniffing the ıppetizing smell of meat and vegeables, Monsieur Loisel put down his ɔen and shuffled to the stove. It was wonderful to have meat twice a week ıow. Without waiting for his wife to come home, Monsieur Loisel popped ı tiny bit of beef into his mouth and felt a delightful guilt. He smacked his lips. When Mathilde had something to work with, she was an excellent cook.

But the soup needed a little more salt. Or perhaps it didn't. He wouldn't want to ruin it. Mathilde should be home now to decide such questions. An annoyed uneasiness took possession of him as he looked out the window, and realized that it was late. It was well past the dinner hour. Half the chimneys had stopped smoking as householders let their kitchen fires go out. Monsieur Loisel had been uncomplaining over a ten-year interruption of his life. But he wanted his dinner on time.

He polished his spectacles and peered down at the figures on the pavement. As they moved in and out through the patches of street light they looked like grotesque foreshortened toys. He could distinguish no one from this height. Hurrying to the alcove, he kicked off his carpet slippers and fumbled for his gaiters. He must go out and look for her. Mathilde was long overdue.

He was beginning to worry now. He remembered newspaper stories of robbers and footpads; ruffians who leapt from alleyways and stole women's rings by slashing off their fingers. Monsieur Loisel shuddered. Mathilde had devoured such stories. The women, she maintained, were more to blame than the criminals. Was not their vanity a constant temptation to violence as they walked abroad displaying their useless jewels?

Monsieur Loisel fumbled for the buttons of his waistcoat. He knew his fears were foolish. The newspapers made one's imagination too vivid. What was there about his wife clumping homeward on ungainly shoes to arouse the cupidity of a footpad?

Then why did he keep seeing the

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leaping figure, the menacing hands, and hearing the running footsteps?

And why, upon the moist and dimly shining cobblestones, did he keep seeing Mathilde sprawled like a broken jumping jack with her limbs at crazy angles? Could this be the end of the bride who had come to him so lovely? He remembered her cool slenderness when he first knew her. Her romantic imaginings and her dainty embarrassments when, as bride and groom, they first had shared their awkward passion. What if she had been vain and frivolous? Life had been hard to her. She was a creature too beautiful to have been born into a world of clerks.

Filled with an unreasoning sadness, he blew out the candle and went through the door toward the stairs. Keeping close to the rickety banister, he felt his way down to the fourth floor landing. The stairs were cluttered with refuse. Since a month ago when he made Mathilde give up her job as janitress, the place had been a disgrace.

Tonight one of the tenants had taken the trouble to light the lamp on the fourth floor. By its faint flicker, he suddenly saw the angular figure of Madame Loisel plodding toward him up the stairs.

"Mathilde!"

She looked up at him and seemed surprised. Both surprised and resentful. She glared at him as she clutched her old cracked patent leather pocketbook to her bosom with both hands. Two small parcels were tucked beneath her elbows.

"Where have you been?" Anxiety made his voice irritable.

She stared at him as though trying to think of an answer.

He took a step toward her and asked, "Is anything wrong?"

"No — no — can't a woman rest in the park without being cross-examined? Is it a sin to enjoy the sunshine? You'd try the patience of a saint!"

"I was worried." He tried to kiss her but she pushed past him.

"No, no! Not here on the public stairway! Stop acting the fool!"

"Can I help you?" He reached for the parcels. "What did you buy?"

"Nothing that concerns you — can't a woman have any privacy . . . ! Let them alone."

But he persisted and, as she jerked away from him, one of the parcels crashed from her arms.

"Now see what you've done!"

Like an angry spirit, she vanished into the gloom of the upper stairs.

Hoping to soothe her, he stooped to retrieve the parcel. It was wrapped in colored paper and tied with fancy two-colored string such as was used by the fashionable chemists and hairdressers. He could see that it had contained a bottle of expensive cold cream. The paper wrappings were cut by the broken glass and a film of fragrant grease was oozing over the stairs.

Monsieur Loisel straightened up. The parcel was ruined beyond salvage. He trudged thoughtfully up the stairs.

What was happening to Mathilde?

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That jar of ointment must have cost all of her week's shopping money. It was her first extravagance since the night she lost the necklace. The night on which she had disdained the public omnibus and had insisted upon going to the ball in a cab.

When he re-entered the garret, he saw her other parcel on the table, but she had retired behind the alcove curtains. And he knew better than to follow her.

He crossed the room and lifted the lid on the soup kettle. He sniffed and reached for the wooden spoon.

"Don't be too long," he said, "the good soup is getting cold."

"The good soup!" Behind the flimsy curtains, Mathilde remembered ironically how that phrase of his had plagued her. Even when they were first married. It was so ambitionless. It still irritated her. He accepted the commonplace. He had no knack for elegance. He was a man for whom wealth could do no good.

Mathilde took off her cape and bonnet. She fumbled clumsily with the knots, trying to untie them with one hand. With the other she clutched the pocketbook.

Not once, since the Forestiers handed her the necklace, had she permitted it to leave her hands. She had clutched it during Jeanne's sentimental babble and the undisciplined congratulations of the servants. Dr. Forestier had offered to see her home in his carriage, but she had refused. She had scarcely been able to restrain her impatience when he had insisted upon presenting her with a bottle of vintage wine from the Forestiers' own table — or to wait while he had rushed off to see that it was properly wrapped.

"Take this," he said, "and promise us that you will drink it with your husband tonight. Soon Jeanne and I will visit you to help celebrate your happiness. But tonight should be for you two alone. Have you given Jeanne your address?"

Mathilde made a hasty promise and muttered her humble address. Then, as they smiled at her and patted her arms affectionately, she finally succeeded in getting down the stairs and out the door.

She wanted to be alone with her treasure. Without thinking of where she was going, moving like a somnambulist through the occasional cross-currents of traffic, she walked heedlessly up one street and down the other, rejoicing in the knowledge that she was wealthy — and that wealth can make one free.

It was some time before she realized that she had retraced her steps to the Champs Élysées — to a spot near where she had met Jeanne.

She sat down on a bench. Then moved to another — nearer to a gendarme and placed closer to a lamppost, for daylight was beginning to fade. A few hours ago she had entered the park a drudge, almost a pauper. Now she was a rich woman. It was time to take inventory.

She and her husband paid thirty-six thousand francs for the necklace

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ten years ago. It should be worth more now. All Paris knew the current government was shaky. For some weeks the editorial writers had been denouncing the increasing tendency of the rich to convert their wealth into movable assets. Those close to the court of Louis Philippe were getting ready to run. And they were reluctant to leave empty-handed. The gazettes said jewelers were doing a rushing business. Today the necklace might bring fifty or sixty thousand francs.

All her life Mathilde had wanted to be rich. She had been born poor and beautiful, a maddening combination. She might have made a wonderful match had her father been able to provide her with a dowry. What a dowry sixty thousand francs would have been!

Mathilde sat under the street light, holding the pocketbook that contained the necklace, and permitted herself to day dream.

She was rich now. The future swung dazzlingly before her, like the bright pendant that hung from the necklace, outshining the stones that supported it. She was only thirty-two years old. The life before her would be so brilliant that it would totally eclipse the feeble sparkle of all previous hopes and years.

A laugh cut in on her reverie and in its harshness it seemed to be the mockery of her own conscience. She had no reason to feel triumphant over a dowry. She was irrevocably married to a little clerk. A pettyfoggling nonentity. And her beauty was gone.

Mathilde was self-centered enough to be a realist. She knew her skin had coarsened and her voice had become strident. She had neither looks nor charm. It was too late now.

The laugh was repeated and she turned to see where it came from. A horse-faced woman was making her way from one of the sidewalk restaurants followed by a swarm of stylish young men. She had prominent discolored teeth and her hair was inaccurately dyed beneath a bonnet of expensive and garish plumes. Her hands were large and her eyes were bold and her skin had become more roughened on the hunting field than Mathilde's had become among her clotheslines.

But the tight-waisted young man in the cocoa-colored coat was calling her "Duchess," and an officer of the Garde Royale was jostling to kiss her hand as they helped her into her cabriolet, laughing and simpering at everything she said.

To Mathilde, the woman's ugliness was a benediction. As she rose from the bench, she shook out her old skirts as though they were made of taffeta. She found a chemist's shop that was open even on Sunday to cater to court belles. To the clerk, who mistook her for somebody's servant, she gave most of her week's shopping money for a jar of cold cream. And as she boarded the crowded omnibus, it was as though invisible fops were kissing her hands.

As Mathilde came out of the alcove

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he saw that Monsieur Loisel had laid he table. He looked up from filling he new soup tureen.

"How nice you look!" he exclaimed.

"It is nothing," she replied shortly. Must you make a scene over it when wash my face and straighten my air?"

"But the collar and cuffs."

"They are old relics, I found them n the bottom of a drawer." She ooked at the table and spoke accus- ngly, "You unwrapped my parcel, he wine."

"Yes, I hoped it was wine. It made ne thirsty to hear the gurgling."

"It was supposed to be a surprise."

"The whole evening is a surprise," ıe drew back her chair. "I will attend o the stove. You might soil your uffs."

He handed her one of his large lean handkerchiefs. It was a long time ince they had used napkins.

"What foolery are you up to?" she lemanded.

"Not foolery — elegance." He sat pposite her. "When my wife brings ıome a jar of cold cream and a bottle f wine, I know where her thoughts ıre heading, and I hasten to con- orm." He reached for her glass and olished it with the handkerchief. 'And may I tell you, my dear, that ou have made me very glad?"

"Glad?" She looked at him curi- ously. "What have you to be glad bout?"

He put down the glass and regarded ıer with quizzical amusement.

"Because these things have given me the answer to a question — the question of your character."

As she returned his look, her voice was guarded. "You have had eleven years of me. You should know me pretty thoroughly by now."

"One cannot always be sure. Your sudden interest in cosmetics gave me quite a start just now." He removed the cover from the tureen and started to fill the soup bowls. "I have been asking myself, ever since we paid the last usurer, how much these last ten years had changed you. I see now that they have changed you very little."

"And you are glad?" she asked incredulously.

"Decidedly. I have thought over this matter of the cold cream and I have decided that I am exhilarated. During all these hard years, do you know what kept me going?"

"Necessity, I suppose."

"No. I could have run away. After all, you were the one who borrowed the necklace. And the one who lost it. All our neighbors knew that. I did not have to be involved." He put down his spoon and assumed a tone of bantering reproach. "My dear, I hope you do not mistake me for a saint. Or for one of those dull fellows of completely thoughtless nobility. I could be a rogue if I chose."

"You are talking like a book," she said. "You have been copying too many manuscripts. But why didn't you run off if you felt that way?"

He leaned toward her. "Because I knew I could never find anything I wanted as much as you. You were my

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only chance to be more than God made me. I never felt proud in my life until I had a woman who was too fine to be the wife of a clerk."

She looked down at her soup plate and saw that he had given her the largest piece of meat.

"Drink your wine," she said, "and let me have some."

He reached the bottle toward her glass.

"Did you notice that this bottle had been uncorked?" he asked.

"Of course it has! Do you think I could bring home a luxury if it were not cheap!" She was lying frantically and finding the task difficult. "I was passing a sidewalk restaurant in the Champs Élysées. A diner was leaving the table with his wine scarcely touched. I made a bargain with the waiter who was cleaning up."

"And a fine bargain," he said, sipping his glass. "If we are to return to the Rue des Martyrs, we must reacclimatize ourselves to little comforts. I am sorry about the cold cream. I tried to save some of it, but it was full of broken glass."

She pushed back her chair. "I had better go clean it up."

"Stop, Madame!" he cried with humorous emphasis. "On the day our last debt was paid, you were through being a janitress. I gave our landlord a piece of my mind, I can tell you! All those years you slaved for him — for a few sous deducted from our rent. If you touch those stairs now he may think I am weakening. I absolutely forbid it."

She made an ironic gesture with her lips and started to get up.

"Please!" he said. "I have begun to feel like a husband again. Do not deny me my self-respect."

She shrugged and sipped her wine.

"If we hurry, we can go to vespers," she said.

"Not tonight." He drank deeply. "Tonight let us sit and talk. Next month we shall be back in our old parish. We will ask for a pew in the middle aisle, and you will have a new bonnet and a new dress."

She made her voice scornful. "Even if our savings would pay for it, the parish would laugh at me. And it would have a right to — a janitress got up in clothes like that."

"Nonsense! How will they know you were a janitress? One appears in a new neighborhood. One makes no reference to a former life. If you look prosperous, you are taken at face value! No questions asked."

She looked at him sharply. Was he reading her thoughts? She had been thinking about this all the way home in the omnibus. There were other cities beside Paris — Lyons or Bordeaux. They would accept her as a rich widow if she appeared there with the money from the necklace. No questions would be asked. After he went to work tomorrow, she would sell the necklace and never come back.

She looked at him again and saw him wool-gathering. No chance of his reading anyone's thoughts! The whole thing would be easy. She became

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angered at his guilelessness.

"I know why you go to vespers no more," she sneered. "And why you sneak in at the back of the church for mass. It is because you feel guilty."

"Guilty?" His look was troubled. "Why should I feel guilty?"

"Because we have no children. We've been too poor to risk it! You think that's a sin — you know you do and you hate me for it."

"No — I don't think it's a sin."

"I wake up at night," she continued cruelly, "to see you telling your beads — you're begging God to forgive you, aren't you?"

He shoved back his chair with a loud clatter. He came toward her around the table. And he strove to control his voice.

"I ask God to understand," he said gently, "and I think He does. I wish that you could."

"You want me to have a child — " Her voice was edged with fear, "now that the debt is paid. Is that it?"

"No. It would be too dangerous. You are past thirty and that is much too late in life for the first child. So I have made myself forget it."

She wanted to strike him. He was too good. Too sanctimonious.

Some uncontrollable impulse made her want to goad him, to break his smugness; so that, when the blow fell, he would know all that he was missing.

"Oh, no, I'm not! Not if we had money enough! Child bearing is no problem at the new English hospital in the Rue de Villiers! They have made it perfectly safe! Not one death from child-bed fever! But they won't let you in the door for less than four thousand francs!"

"Mathilde! Be quiet! I know you are as disappointed as I am, but don't excite yourself."

"I am not excited! You are! I can see it in your face. Shall we go to the loan sharks? We have slaved for my vanity, now we can slave for yours. For four thousand francs you can have your precious son — "

He struck her a hard stinging blow, right across the mouth. She looked up at him in amazement.

"I had not thought of a son," he said, "but once I hoped for a daughter."

The hysteria had gone out of her. But she still contradicted him.

"I cannot understand you. All men want sons."

It was the first sarcastic smile she ever had seen on his face.

"Perhaps I have been deficient in vanity," he said, "but I found little about myself to perpetuate. The world is never short of clerks. But you always seemed different to me. Even when I tried to look at you realistically, when I admitted that the years have brought changes and that your petulance had soured into surliness, I was still proud of your narrow waist and straight back. Every man needs some vanity. I told myself I would be happy when we returned to the Rue de Martyrs and I could compare my hostess with the wives of the other clerks. Now I am not so sure. The faces of those other women are flabby and stupid — but, for the most part,

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they are kind.

"For a long time," he said, "I told myself I had wronged you. You seemed too good to be the wife of a clerk. I hoped some day I could see your youth and prettiness repeated in a daughter. I felt that if I could work for her, and provide her with a dowry, something like the amount we saved for the necklace, I would somehow be making things right, and paying for a blessing I had not deserved."

There was a long silence in the room before he turned to her and added, without bitterness, "You see, in spite of the fact that you read the novels, while I only copied them, I am the one who has been the sentimentalist and the fool. I tried to give you something you had no use for — something you didn't want — the knowledge that there was one person out of all humanity who cared whether you lived or died. The feeling that there was one person in this world who would always remember your beauty and want to see it preserved. . . . Instead of helping you pay for the necklace, I should have given you what money I had ten years ago, and told you to go away."

She got up and spoke in a flat voice.

"I am tired," she said, "I am going to bed. It has been an exhausting day."

For a long time he sat looking at the stars, waiting until he was sure she would be asleep. Then he undressed silently and turned out the lamp.

He moved softly into the curtained alcove and reached for his worn rosary.

But as he touched it, his hand drew back and he gasped a choked exclamation of surprise.

There on the bedpost, intertwined with the smoothly-worn prayer beads, he saw the diamond necklace shining softly like the tears of a Magdalene.

Mathilde lay beside her sleeping husband and her face was misty with tears. She had forced herself to one great moment of unselfishness and she asked God, desperately, to somehow make it last. She prayed with anxiety and humility. For she finally knew herself.

When their neighbors found them on Monday morning, there was a look of tranquillity upon the faces of Monsieur Loisel and his bride. After much discussion, the priest of their parish finally decided that they should be buried in consecrated soil, side by side. Despite the fact the police found poison in their wine bottle, the priest was not quite willing to call it suicide. He felt that their deaths might be somehow linked with the mystery of the big blond man who was found that same morning at the foot of the tenement stairs. Apparently there had been an accident. Investigation revealed a smear of cold cream on his right boot — and in his pocket, a necklace valued at sixty thousand francs.

He was a very fashionable physician, but he couldn't cure his own broken neck.

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It is a genuine delight and privilege — indeed, a heart-warming honor — to welcome Howard Haycraft to the staff of EQMM. Mr. Haycraft is the author, as you undoubtedly know, of MURDER FOR PLEASURE (*Appleton-Century, 1941*), *the first full-length study of the detective story published in the United States — a book so "grand and fascinating" (in the words of Rex Stout), of such "permanent value" (Erle Stanley Gardner's judgment), so "extremely well written and salted with wit and humor" (William Lyon Phelps's praise), so "remarkable and necessary" (quoting Vincent Starrett), a book so "monumental" that overnight it established Mr. Haycraft as the foremost historian of the detective story in America.*

Beginning with this issue, Mr. Haycraft inaugurates a department of comment and criticism written especially for readers of EQMM. The department is called "Speaking of Crime," and for a short period (very short, we hope!) it will appear only every other month; but as soon as Mr. Haycraft can properly organize his work schedule, "Speaking of Crime" will become a regular monthly feature in the now-monthly EQMM.

In his letter accompanying his first "column" Mr. Haycraft writes: "One point, I think, is worth stressing — that 'Speaking of Crime' is not committed to any fixed form." We heartily concur; in fact, we take this editorial opportunity to guarantee Mr. Haycraft free rein. The space allotted to his department is all his and his alone: he may write what he pleases, the way he pleases, and when he pleases; he may agree with E.Q., or disagree with E.Q., as his honest judgment of detective fiction dictates, and we go on record here and now, publicly and in print, that never under any circumstances whatever will we tie a string to Mr. Haycraft's freedom of speech and pursuit of 'tec truth.

To paraphrase the great Patrick Henry — if this be reason, Howard, make the most of it!

SPEAKING OF CRIME

A Department of Comment and Criticism

by HOWARD HAYCRAFT

OF ALL the evidence of respectability accumulated by the mystery-crime-detective story in recent years, not the least tangible and important has been the growth of a substantial body of critical literature. Where once detective story review departments were the exception, they are now the rule in virtually all the important journals. Meanwhile, increasing num-

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bers of intellectuals have turned their attention to the whodunit in an effort to find out what makes it tick. More serious critical comment, both in and out of the review columns, is being devoted today to the detective story (and its relations-by-marriage) than at any time in its 100-year history.

Believing that the state of detective story criticism is a matter of legitimate interest to readers, this "department of comment and criticism" proposes to summarize and discuss, from time to time, outstanding trends, developments, and articles in the critical field.

Let us consider this month the singular case of Edmund Wilson, the eminent "New Yorker" critic, whose triple-barrelled attack on the modern detective story and its followers a short time ago touched off one of the sharpest literary controversies in many years. Now, I am not among those who contend that Mr. Wilson should be boiled in oil or decapitated. I even suspect that his animadversions may have done the *genre* an indirect favor, by disturbing a certain smugness into which some readers and writers (and critics) of the police novel have fallen. But I do charge that his arguments are based on insufficient data, that his conclusions are not warranted by the evidence he has adduced, and that at least one of his pronouncements is pretty irresponsible stuff for a major critic of his reputation to be talking.

Let's suppose — by way of analogy — that I were to review in these columns a half dozen volumes of modern poetry, stating as a premise that I had never read any modern poetry and had long been puzzled by those who profess to enjoy it. Proceeding from this unbiased approach, I make a finding and derive a conclusion. The finding is that I don't like modern poetry and can't understand what others see in it. The conclusion is that, ergo, they only *think* they enjoy it; that it has become to them a habit, a "drug." Surely, Mr. Wilson would be the first to decry such heads-I-win-tails-you-lose reasoning. Yet such, in essence, was the method and substance of his first onslaught on the whodunit.

In a second article Mr. Wilson reported on older works which indignant readers of the first article had recommended to his attention. Here again he argued (by invitation, it is true) from isolated examples rather than knowledge of the field as a whole or any very clear conception of what the crime-detective story is and is not. His finding this time was that the books were "dull," "ill-written," and "boring" (all matters of personal opinion, of course); his rather shocking conclusion, that paper should not be wasted on publishing "this rubbish." In a third article he examined the Sherlock Holmes saga, to the disparagement of the modern product.

By reducing his criticism to the level of like-and-don't-like, Mr. Wilson invited and brought on a shouting-match of denial and affirmation with incensed partisans of the detective story which has tended to obscure

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the essential invalidity of his attack. Avoiding the temptation to debate minor issues with him — to point out, for example, that the test of "good writing" is its effectiveness within its own frame of reference — that to credit the detective story (as he has) with creating the illusion of suspense is high praise rather than otherwise — that the nostalgic charm of the Baker Street legends is as critically incomparable with the appeal of the present-day whodunit as Trollope is to Hemingway; avoiding such fascinating by-paths of fallacy and refutation, it seems to me that there are three fundamental weaknesses in Mr. Wilson's position:

First, no one has any intention of compelling him to read detective stories if he does not choose to do so.

Second, when he — on the other hand — virtually advocates the prohibition of detective stories ("we shall do well to discourage the squandering of . . . paper") because he, Wilson, does not like them, he has abused the critical prerogative and come perilously close to suppressive censorship of the *genus* blue-nose. No one will dispute Mr. Wilson's right to express his likes and dislikes as freely, violently, and publicly as he may wish, with or without adequate basis. But when he proposes to make them mandatory on others — well, I simply refuse to believe that a critic of his demonstrated integrity and stature in other fields could have meant seriously what he seems to have said.

Third, even were we to accept his arguments as valid, Mr. Wilson has proved in the final analysis nothing more profound than the fact that the modern whodunit is meat to some men, poison to others. It seems, somehow, that this should have been apparent without so much work.

Mr. Wilson's curious desire to make others sing to his tune in this matter has caused considerable speculation. One clue to his behavior, it seems to me, has been overlooked. As the Holmesian scholar he has shown himself to be, Mr. Wilson is of course familiar with the Conanical apocrypha — those unpublished adventures of The Master which Dr. Watson tells us repose in a tin dispatch box somewhere in the vaults of Cox's bank, at Charing Cross. One of these, mentioned by Watson in *The Adventure of Black Peter*, illustrates again the oddly prophetic faculty so often demonstrated by Doyle. Sherlockians will have anticipated me. I refer, of course, to The Case of Wilson, the Notorious Canary Trainer.

Among the Recent Mysteries

Perhaps the brightest aspect of a mystery season that cannot by any stretch of the imagination be called a vintage year is the emergence of several better-than-average first novels. Of those which have reached my desk up to press-time, I recommend three to your attention:

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Elinor Chamberlain's APPOINTMENT IN MANILA (Dodd, Mead), a smooth and literate study of murder, Japanese deviltry, and American greed in the Philippines (time: late 1941), might well have been issued as a "straight" novel had it not won the publishers' Red Badge Prize. Miss Chamberlain formerly taught English in the University of the Philippines. She uses her background material with restraint and to excellent effect, handles narrative and character in experienced fashion, and conceals the identity of her murderer well until almost the last, when deduction gives way to shooting.

Another newcomer who has turned his own experiences to good account is Sgt. Julian Fast, whose WATCHFUL BY NIGHT (Farrar & Rinehart) is a fresh and immediate first mystery of the deduction-cum-action school, pleasantly told. A tale of multiple homicide and native Fascism centering around the medical laboratory of an Army camp near Boston, its chief shortcoming is one common to beginners: too many suspects too vaguely identified. (When the culprit was revealed I had difficulty placing him.) Incidentally, Sgt. Fast's mystery is one of the curiously few to employ the military aspects of the war as background material. The only previous book-length examples I can recall (I stand open to correction) are Lt. Allan Bosworth's story of sabotage on a submarine, FULL CRASH DIVE, and Colin Curzon's THE BODY IN THE BARRAGE BALLOON, both published two or three years ago.

When is a new author not a new author? Maurice Walsh's novels of Irish and Scottish country life have been deservedly popular on both sides of the water for a good twenty years, but so far as I can ascertain, NINE STRINGS TO YOUR BOW (Lippincott) is his first detective story. To his new *métier* Mr. Walsh brings the urbanity, flavor, and artful characterization that have marked his previous writing, together with sound sleuthing and an original and ingratiating Irish detective, Con Madden, who should move rapidly to the head of the class. The other participants are Scottish and the scene is the Scottish lowlands. Though the puzzle is not too hard to guess, and though some American readers may find the action a bit slow-paced, NINE STRINGS TO YOUR BOW qualifies as one of the superior mysteries of the year. It should appeal particularly to admirers of Ngaio Marsh.

Hitting the season's high spots:

Purists, I am afraid, will deal pretty severely with the overly-complex solution of Mary Roberts Rinehart's THE YELLOW ROOM (Farrar & Rinehart), the first new novel in three years by the dean of American mystery writers. Otherwise, this story of murder and inevitable romance in a Maine summer colony in wartime is told with the author's familiar narrative skill and warm human sympathy.

Honors for the season's most skilful deductive plotting belong, without much question, to Helen McCloy's THE ONE THAT GOT AWAY (Morrow). A little less psychological talk would

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have made this an even better book, although psychiatry plays a leading part in the deductions of criminologist Basil Willing (now a four-striper in U. S. Naval Intelligence) leading to his exposure of a murderous Nazi fugitive in the Scottish highlands. Miss McCloy's mature and finished novel also packs the year's most expert surprise ending.

H. C. Bailey's THE WRONG MAN (Crime Club) begins with an irritatingly hearty American colonel, on apparently indefinite leave, who stumbles onto unnatural death and other sordid dealings in evacuated England while looking up the wife of a supposedly deceased British buddy. After a long arid stretch, due to inadequate motivation, the story comes partially to life when that old rapscallion Joshua Clunk is called in. But the subtle styling and characterization we have come to expect from Bailey are almost totally absent: some of the actors are only faceless names and some of the confusing relationships are never satisfactorily explained.

Readers of THE SMELL OF MONEY a season or so ago will not need to be reminded that Matthew Head is an unorthodox young author who achieves his effects with wit, verve, and imagination. In THE DEVIL IN THE BUSH (Simon & Schuster) he has added to these ingredients some fascinating and authentic detail about life in a miniscule European colony deep in the African bush, and a cast of sharply etched characters, not borrowed from stock. There is nothing intricate or even particularly baffling about either puzzle or solution of this hard-to-classify novel, but the story which links them comes close to being the season's most readable.

Recommended Reading

Action: THE CASE OF THE HALF-WAKENED WIFE by Erle Stanley Gardner (Mill); THE GIRL WITH THE FRIGHTENED EYES by Lawrence Lariar (Dodd, Mead); WOMAN AT BAY by George Harmon Coxe (Knopf); MARKED FOR MURDER by Brett Halliday (Dodd, Mead).

Anthologies: ROGUES' GALLERY edited by Ellery Queen (Little, Brown); THE PORTABLE MURDER BOOK edited by Joseph Henry Jackson (Viking).

Background: DEATH OF A SWAGMAN by Arthur W. Upfield (Crime Club); MURDER BEFORE MIDNIGHT by A. B. Cunningham (Dutton); PORT OF SEVEN STRANGERS by Kathleen Moore Knight (Crime Club); DEATH SAILS IN A HIGH WIND by Theodora Du Bois (Crime Club).

Deduction: FOUR PAST FOUR by Roy Vickers (Jefferson House); PUZZLE FOR WANTONS by Patrick Quentin (Simon & Schuster); V AS IN VICTIM by Lawrence Treat (Duell, Sloan & Pearce); THE SCARLET BUTTON by Anthony Gilbert (A. S. Barnes).

Humor: THE OWL IN THE CELLAR by Margaret Scherf (Crime Club).

Romance: DARK PROPHECY by Marjorie Alan (Mill).

Suspense: DREAD JOURNEY by Dorothy B. Hughes (Duell, Sloan & Pearce).

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At the time of this writing, Anthony Boucher is brain-deep in two highly confidential literary assignments — very hush-hush and supersecret, since they involve two famous names among etheric, if not precisely ethereal, detectives. Indeed, if the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth were told, fandom might easily be shocked and a scandal in Detectivania would be afoot. Be that as it may, Mr. Boucher's work schedule is a mere eight days to the week — which explains why we have not heard from our fly-swatting dipsodetective, Nick Noble, for more than a year.

Welcome home, Nick. We've been saving a bottle of prewar Harvey's Bristol Cream for you, and we're lucky to have that these new-vintage days. . . .

One of crime fiction's favorite gambits is the theme of collectors and collections. Almost every type of treasured object has been the focal point of theft and/or murder: rare books, coins, and stamps; china, silver, and glassware; paintings, tapestries, statuary; historic mementoes, historic documents, historic knickknacks; letters, autographs, manuscripts; jewels, clocks, snuff boxes; yes, even — there's one famous case on record — corpses! But to the best of your Editor's knowledge, the collection that backgrounds this new Noble strikes a fresh note in detective fiction. It is a collection of records — musical records — a collecting mania that has made enormous strides in recent years.

So here's something new about old Nick: motive and music, opportunity and opera, means and melody — a double treat of roguery and recordings. . . .

LIKE COUNT PALMIERI

by ANTHONY BOUCHER

NICK NOBLE noticed the little man entering the Chula Negra as he noticed everything, cursorily but completely. The little man was slight, hardly taller or heavier than Noble himself, and he was having trouble with a heavy parcel, paper-wrapped and about a foot square. He set it carefully down on the counter, sighed with relief, and gasped, "Beer . . .!" Lucita, Mamá Gonzales' elder and plumper daughter, served him; and breath and life came back into him as he drank.

He wiped his face, which had the odd gift of sweating heavily without reddening, ordered another beer, and looked idly at the juke box beside the counter. Then his idle gaze changed to a startling double take. He got up, fumbling for a nickel, and approached the box incredulously.

From his regular post in the fourth booth on the left, Nick Noble could

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hardly hear the record. He concluded that it must be an old pre-electric recording; Mamá Gonzales kept a few such in the box for sentimental reasons. But he could almost hear it simply by watching the expression of growing ecstasy on the little man's face.

Nick Noble sat quietly drinking his sherry and watching the comedy. The man turned and spoke rapidly to Lucita, who shrugged. He insisted, and she went back to the kitchen. Now Mamá Gonzales herself came out, trailing clouds of red pepper and bitter chocolate (today was Wednesday: *lengua en mole*). In no time at all she and the stranger had reached a complete misunderstanding, which Lucita was helpless to straighten out.

At last the little man asked loudly and plaintively: "Can anybody here interpret for me?"

Nick Noble's curiosity is not confined to the criminological. He eased himself out of the booth and came up to the small group. The stranger, after one surprised glance at Noble's pale, almost subterranean face, explained the situation.

He pointed at the juke label, which stated:

16 CENICIENTA — Geyer

"It isn't possible," he said breathlessly. "I'd have sworn she never recorded it. But there it is. *Cenicienta* — Italian *Cenerentola*, English *Cinderella* — is a Rossini opera. Wonderful coloratura contralto role — never very popular in this country — nobody sings it anywhere since Supervia died. I knew Geyer used to sing it occasionally in her younger days — incredible range! — but a record. . . . Listen!"

He put in another nickel. The old recording came through faintly ("On my own machine I can turn up the volume," the man explained) but impressively. The music was not in itself great, but the perfect vehicle for the greatest voice of this century, that of Lena Geyer. The absolute authority of the recitative, the agile clarity of the coloratura passages impressed even Nick Noble. He remembered, for the first time in twenty years, that Martha had loved opera, and had been communicating her enthusiasm to him when . . .

The record ended, and Mamá Gonzales burst out. Nick Noble listened and gave a condensed translation: "Brought it from Mexico. Belonged to her mother. Wouldn't think of parting with it."

The little man presented a card which read:

MATTESON & HARBRECHT
Attorneys-at-law
VINCENT MATTESON

With it he passed over a five-dollar bill, then, as Mamá Gonzales remained adamant, a ten. Then he took out his checkbook. Still she shook her head. He went over to the counter and undid the parcel.

"I've been record-hunting in the Main Street shops. I had good luck,

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too. There are some finds here. Tell her she can have any or all of them."

The request was translated and rejected. Mr. Matteson sighed. "Then do you think . . . as a very special favor . . . she might . . . let me see the record?"

Mamá Gonzales smiled like one indulging a child's whim, went around behind the juke box, and fetched out the disc. It bore a faded label that Nick Noble had never seen before, but Matteson recognized it. "Of course!" he observed to himself, cradling the record tenderly. "A Musofonia. Small company that used to specialize in the Latin-American trade — they go in more for these lesser Italian operas than we do. . . . Madam, what do you mean by wearing out this priceless treasure in a juke box?"

Her answer, omitting the saints and such, boiled down to she had no other phonograph to play her sainted mother's records on and it wouldn't wear out because nobody ever wanted to pay a nickel to hear it.

Regretfully Mr. Matteson set the record down. "Give her the card. Tell her to get in touch with me if she changes her mind. Meanwhile . . . I imagine I'll be around again." He rewrapped his parcel. "Thank you for your assistance, sir."

As he departed, Nick Noble looked with amusement at his untouched second beer, forgotten in the excitement. Then he looked at the record on the counter and cried, "Hi!"

It was not the Lena Geyer. It was *Ernani involami* sung by Celestina Boninsegna. And under it were the five and the ten, neatly folded.

Noble's "Hi!" brought Mr. Matteson back. He took the Geyer out of his parcel, replaced the Boninsegna therein, and pocketed the bills. "Well," he smiled dryly, "no harm in trying, was there?"

After that, Mr. Matteson became a regular customer of the Chula Negra. Not such a fixture as Nick Noble; but whenever he went exploring in the Main Street second-hand record stores, he stopped by for a beer and a nickel's worth of Lena Geyer. He even brought his partner in to hear the treasure.

Milton Harbrecht was also a record collector, but of a much more ponderous sort. While there was something almost charming in Mr. Matteson's naive enthusiasm, Harbrecht took his position seriously, as befitted a man of his substantial appearance. "I tell you, Noble," he declaimed, "we collectors are benefiting humanity. Without us, the great voices of the first quarter of this century would be lost forever. We are preserving beauty from oblivion. I look upon it as a public trust — in fact, I have been considering leaving my entire collection to the state university, with a proper endowment for upkeep."

His pomposity faded a little when he listened to Geyer, but it returned full force when Lieutenant MacDonald (of Homicide) dropped in with the Larrimore file. He was almost rude

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in his abrupt and majestic departure, and Mr. Matteson explained: "He hates co——er, police officers. Some prank of his youth landed him in their custody, and he has never forgotten the treatment he received. Of course, I realize that times have changed —"

"Not quite," MacDonald admitted. "We still have the petty sadists with us. In fact, I once had the pleasure of sending one such to the lethal gas chamber — or rather, Nick here did."

Mr. Matteson's eyes widened; lawyer though he was, he listened with almost a layman's puzzled awe to an account of the Barker case and Nick Noble's role in it. He proved such an agreeably impressed audience that he was allowed to remain while Noble looked over the Larrimore file and gave his verdict.

"Fraud, of course," he said when his pallid eyes unglazed. "Corpse has nicotine stains only on *back* of teeth: means pipe. Pictures" — he waved at several glossy prints — "with cigaret. If an author doesn't smoke pipe in publicity stills, doesn't smoke it at all. So it isn't Larrimore."

Mr. Matteson goggled. He left with MacDonald, and heard from the Lieutenant the story of how Nick Noble had sunk from the brightest officer on the force to a thinking machine fueled by sherry. And he went home still goggling.

It was a week later that MacDonald looked in at the fourth booth on the left. "It's your friend Matteson, Nick," he said.

Nick Noble raised his eyes from his sherry. "Client of yours?"

"Not strictly. He's alive, and my clients are usually dead. But somebody's tried to steal all his beautiful records."

"So what brings you in?"

"He came to me about it, since he'd met me. And because there's an attempted homicide involved, I managed to stretch a point and get in on it."

"Tell," said Nick Noble tersely.

"His man, Charles Wilson, sleeps in a room next to the precious music room. He woke up last night to find somebody leaning over his bed and about to stab him. Saw moonlight on the blade. Now Wilson's a Negro, but he'd be a great disappointment to fiction writers. He didn't think it was a ghost, nor start rolling his eyes in terror, nor mutter 'Feet, do yo' stuff!' nor any of the other things that make nice comedy relief. He very sensibly and capably rolled off the bed and under it. The knife went into his pillow. He tried to grab the attacker's feet from under the bed, but they got away. The intruder went into the music room, but Wilson was close on his heels, with his own knife; so the intruder made a quick exit out the window. Wilson followed, but lost his would-be murderer in the grounds. Then Wilson roused the household and they staged a general search which accomplished nothing but trampling out the invader's footprints."

Nick Noble nodded. "Any ideas?"

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"Matteson doesn't think it was an ordinary burglar, because such don't know about the value of old records. I think he's right, but some smart boy may have caught on by now. He thinks it's an inside job framed to look pro, and he may have something there."

"Suspects?"

"He wants me to come out there to dinner tonight," MacDonald answered indirectly, "and bring you along. Want to come? You can meet the household and judge for yourself."

Nick Noble hesitated.

"Collecting runs in the family," MacDonald added. "Matteson's father collected sherry."

Nick Noble smiled.

The Matteson home was impressively lost among trees and shrubs in a canyon in Beverly Hills. MacDonald was about to ring the doorbell when Nick Noble tried the knob and found it unlocked. He shoved the door open and stepped in, saying, "You never know. . . ."

"Scotland Yard wouldn't approve," MacDonald observed, and followed him.

There was no one in the unobtrusively comfortable rooms at the front of the house. As they went down the hall, they passed an open door through which they could see walls lined with record-shelves. In a room a little way beyond a voice was speaking. "No, no. Ten fifty," Mr. Matteson was saying as they came level with the door of his study. "Yes. Wait till you see their —" He broke off and nodded to his guests. "Right. Goodbye." He hung up the telephone. "Good evening, gentlemen. Where's Wilson, confound him?"

"No one answered," MacDonald lied. "Making a date or bidding for some more records?"

"What? Oh. Ten fifty. Does one make dates for such oddly precise minutes? I was arguing with that partner of mine. He's compiling a Chaliapin discography, and I caught an error in his listing of *Down the Petersky*. Victor record number 1050."

"I wondered about prices," MacDonald mused as Mr. Matteson rang for drinks. "Ten fifty would seem a lot for a record."

"Would it?" The collector laughed. "Of course the so-called 'classical' records don't fetch such fabulous prices as hot jazz. The hot collectors will readily pay up to and over a hundred dollars for old originals. With us — well, the scarcer old vocals run about five dollars from a dealer who specializes, and much less from one who doesn't. I've made great finds for a quarter — and then again at auctions I've been forced up to twenty-five dollars. And of course there are certain records, like Lilli Lehmann's Odeons and some of those obscure Geyers, that just never come on the market at all."

"Then at that rate, when a burglar could be spending his time and effort on diamonds, say, would he be able to carry off enough records to make it worth his while?"

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"I rather doubt," said Mr. Matteson obscurely, "that this burglar is interested in profit."

At that point Wilson came in with the drinks. The Negro was a handsome man of the North African type. He moved gracefully, and it was easy to imagine his deft evasion of the knife in the darkness. "Mrs. Hodzak says dinner will be ready when you've finished your drinks, sir," he announced as he set down the tray.

"How good a look did you get at your assailant, Wilson?" MacDonald asked.

"Frankly, sir, none. I saw the knife rather than the man, and when I chased him he kept well ahead of me."

"If he hadn't attacked you, he might have pulled off his job. Why did he bother?"

"The music-room windows are soundly latched on the inside, but I sleep with my window open. I suppose that was the nearest way in to the room he wanted. I must have moved in my sleep some way, giving him the idea that I'd seen him."

"Shrewd man," MacDonald nodded when Wilson had gone. "That's about the way Nick and I had doped it. — Nick! What's the matter?"

Nick Noble stared bitterly at his glass. "First good sherry in twenty years. And my buds so rotted I can't taste it. . . ."

One reason why MacDonald had welcomed the dinner invitation was pure curiosity. He had never seen Nick Noble put anything solid in his mouth, and he wanted to watch. But his curiosity remained ungratified; whenever he looked down the table, Noble was sipping his wine (he had persuaded his host to give him the domestic cooking sherry from the kitchen instead of wasting on his tasteless mouth the noble product of Jérez de la Frontera); and yet somehow his plate was clean at the end of the meal. MacDonald indulged in unprofitable speculations about osmosis.

He had plenty of time for speculation during dinner. Table talk did not precisely flow. Mr. Matteson's mind was in the music room, as though another attempt on his beloved discs might be made at any moment. His son and daughter both ate as though it were a convenience and an economy to eat at home, but an ordeal that there was no sense in prolonging.

These children of Matteson's were alike only in their obvious distaste for their home. The son, Edgar, MacDonald put down as that new breed of pharisee, the scientific prig. His father's occasional attempts at conversation, whether chat about his collection or shop talk arising from his profession or the Lieutenant's, were sharply squelched by the youth, who felt that nothing on earth had any importance if it could not be verified in a laboratory. He had one in the rear of the house where, in his hours away from the University, he carried on certain researches which he veiled in awesome mystery.

"My God, pater," he said once

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(and MacDonald winced at a locution which he had never heard on American lips before), "if you only collected decent recordings, one might understand. This is the fifth decade of the twentieth century, and you're collecting coal-oil lamps and buggy-robes!"

Mr. Matteson protested that a great performance archaically recorded might outweigh a mediocre one presented with all the marvels of modern science; but Edgar's lofty mind had retired to the laboratory.

Celia said little, possibly because speech might disarrange the perpetual pout into which her lips had settled. She was pretty — or at least she was young enough to seem so — but her prettiness was not enhanced by a dinner gown which even MacDonald knew was not this season's. She confined herself to pursing up the pout even more bitterly whenever records were mentioned. Her mind was also elsewhere; MacDonald's guess as to where was confirmed when Wilson announced that a Mr. Woodruff was waiting. For an instant the pout vanished, and there was almost life in her face as she left the table abruptly and without goodbyes.

Edgar started after her, and answered his father's "Young man, where do you think you're going?" with a terse, "Lab."

"You were working there last night too?" MacDonald asked.

"When the man with the knife tried to do something useful with those records? Yes. And all the to-do ruined the timing on an experiment."

Everyone has obsessions, MacDonald reflected; and the secret of a happy family is to share them. But if the family is dividedly obsessed, some by records, some by laboratories, some by Mr. Woodruffs; and if the family money goes for only one of those obsessions . . .

He was not unprepared for the theories which Mr. Matteson advanced over coffee in the music room.

". . . an inside job," the little man repeated. "Which reduces it to four people. Mrs. Hodzak, the cook, was at her home that night; I checked with her sister. So that leaves . . ." He held up four fingers and began ticking them off as though the names were those of impersonal strangers. "*Edgar.* He's always wanting money for his ridiculous laboratory, and how does he expect me to help him when he refuses even to explain his work to me? Says a mind like mine couldn't be expected — Bah . . . *Celia.*" (Tick.) "But not for money. Not that she couldn't use some, but her feline little mind would like nothing better than —"

"Smash," said Nick Noble, with a comprehensive gesture.

"Exactly. Shatter, destroy this whole collection out of pure spite, and blame it on a burglar. That would be Celia."

"That's two," said MacDonald.

Reluctantly Mr. Matteson ticked down a third finger. "*Wilson.* You called him shrewd. He is. He could have invented that whole story, slashed his pillow with a knife —"

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"Why?"

"In his case, I should imagine, pure commercialism. Some opportunity to dispose of the records to a rival collector —"

"— such as your partner?"

Mr. Matterson nodded. "And that . . ." His remaining finger ticked down. He spoke awkwardly, hesitantly. "That brings me to the fourth."

"I see. You have items he wants as badly as that?"

"Not only the items, though there *is* that complete file of Nordicas. . . . No . . . Lieutenant," he said abruptly, "I'm afraid. This burglar tried to kill Wilson, and with damned little reason. I'm afraid that was only a build-up. My partner and I have made wills leaving our estates to each other — our residual estates, that is. Milton, who is fortunate enough to be a bachelor, can afford many philanthropic legacies, while I must make proper provision for these . . . these serpent's teeth of mine. But my residue, I may say without boasting, is quite enough to assure at least a keen interest on Milton's part if anything were to . . . happen to me in a burglary."

MacDonald leaned forward seriously. "Mr. Matteson —" he began; but at that moment Nick Noble, who had been poking at the files, came up with a record. "Like to hear this," he said.

It was Chaliapin's *Down the Petersky*, Victor 1050.

Mr. Matteson played it — a rowdy roistering street song, delivered with all the legendary Chaliapin vigor — and was launched on his hobby. He seemed almost to forget the question of burglary (and murder?) as he explained and demonstrated his collection and his custom-built record-player — his one concession to the attainments of modern science.

MacDonald learned a great deal. He learned that the single records (which constituted the bulk of the collection, since it went back to the days before album sets) were filed in shelves, alphabetically under record companies and numerically under order number, and were fully cross-indexed, by composer, title and performer, in an elaborate card catalog (although Mr. Matteson seemed to know the numbers of most of his favorites without reference to the index) — all of which meant that a thief would have to count on considerable undisturbed time if he were to locate the more valuable records. He would also need specialized knowledge, since an admirable record may also be a very common one.

MacDonald learned other facts not so professionally relevant. He learned to admire the chaste bel canto of Boninsegna or Battistini, the rich authority of José Mardones, the impeccable artistry of Edmond Clément — none of whom, he confessed, he had ever heard of before. And he learned, when he inquired about Patti, that no contemporary ear can judge her by the wretched recordings of the last shreds of her voice.

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Mr. Matteson had just finished playing Geyer's record of the great *scena* from *Fidelio*, and MacDonald's eyes were popping. "It's true," he said. "There were giants on the earth in those days. After that, even Flagstad . . ." He broke off and watched his host curiously. The little man had refiled the Geyer, and stood there twitching nervously. Then he reached behind the stack of opera libretti in the adjacent cabinet and took out something which he laid gingerly on the table.

It was a .45 automatic.

"I'm afraid," he said frankly. "And all the time we've been playing records — yes, I have a permit of course — I've been getting more afraid. For my records and — well, for me. Tell me, Lieutenant: do you believe in hunches?"

"Sometimes," MacDonald said cautiously.

"He's coming tonight." It was a flat statement of fact. "I feel it in my marrow. He's coming and . . . You're armed, Lieutenant?"

MacDonald patted his shoulder.

"I realize what an imposition it must seem. But this man is a killer, Lieutenant. Wilson will tell you that. And if you could see your way clear to — to a vigil with me . . . ?"

MacDonald looked at Nick Noble. Noble held up his personal bottle of kitchen sherry; it was almost half full. MacDonald nodded.

A change seemed to come over Mr. Matteson, as though the sharing of his burden had all but removed it. He moved about the room briskly, lightly, arranging bottles and glasses convenient to chairs, closing the record-player, opening the curtains. Then he switched off the lights.

MacDonald drew his own automatic and placed it on the table ready to his hand. Then they sat, in the quiet darkness. MacDonald spoke rarely and Nick Noble never; but Mr. Matteson occasionally broke the stillness to tell some amusing collectors' anecdote or to wonder audibly for whom they were waiting.

MacDonald wondered too. He wondered what manner of man could speculate so calmly about his son, his daughter and his partner. He wondered what sort of lawyer Mr. Matteson was, and if he ever came alive in the courtroom to nearly the extent that he did in his music room. . . .

MacDonald's eyes were shutting after an hour in the dark. They blinked open as he thought he heard a sound in the next room. He was struggling to keep them open when the door swung inward.

The faint light from the hall outlined a figure of medium height, heavy or heavily wrapped. It crossed the room silently and paused before the files of records. It stretched out a hand in the dimness, and MacDonald said levelly, "You're covered, my bucko."

The figure recklessly whirled and fired. MacDonald's gun answered, and a second flash came from beside him. Somewhere in the noise of the two shots was the astonished cry of a

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ıuman voice, probably Nick Noble's. The figure toppled over.

MacDonald switched on the table amp. Noble was clutching Mr. Matteson's right arm, but the little man hook loose and started forward at he same time as MacDonald. They ollided and sprawled, their autonatics crashing on the floor. MacDonald stumbled to his feet, reached he fallen figure, and recoiled in astonishment.

It was not the figure's identity that o astonished him. The ponderous partner Harbrecht had been his favorte candidate from the start. It was he fact that the man was dying.

MacDonald had aimed for his legs. The right side of his face was torn ıway. The dying man's lips twitched ınd something like comprehension glittered for a second in his eyes. He ıaid, "Like Palmieri . . ."

By the time MacDonald had traveled to the table for whisky and brought it back, the dying man was still.

Matteson stood there beside the dead intruder, his feet firmly planted, his body all ajerk with petty movements. "Milton Harbrecht . . ." he kept saying. "My partner . . . He wanted to . . . My partner . . ." At last he desisted from the litany and said, "Thank God, at least I didn't kill him."

"So?"

"I shot him in the thigh. Lieutenant, you didn't have to — Oh, I know he was a . . . killer, but if you'd only winged him. . . ."

MacDonald looked at the body. There was a bullet hole in the fleshy thigh.

Nick Noble said softly, "What did he say?"

"Like a palmetto," Mr. Matteson muttered absently. "Whatever that means."

"Not quite," MacDonald corrected. "He said, 'Like Palmieri.' "

Nick Noble murmured, "Tosca . . . ?" His blue eyes glazed over as he strolled away.

MacDonald said, "I'll call the boys. I'm sorry, Mr. Matteson. It's hell it had to end this way. But at least it's a clear case of self-defense."

"I didn't shoot him," Matteson insisted. "I mean, I didn't kill him. They can tell in the autopsy, can't they? Ballistics?"

"They can tell," said MacDonald.

Nick Noble wandered back with a small paper-bound book in his hand. "What's holding you, Mac?" he asked.

MacDonald moved toward the phone. "Of course."

Nick Noble shook his head. "Uh uh. What's holding up arrest?" He jerked his thumb at Matteson. "Murder."

It was the music room. There should have been an orchestral chord, *tutti, fff*, with a roll on the kettledrums. Instead there was silence while Mr. Matteson blinked. "Murder?" he said at last, and he was pretty old for his voice to be changing.

Nick Noble said, "You killed him. How know which bullet unless you

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fired it on purpose?"

Mr. Matteson laughed. "My dear drunken reasoner, the autopsy will establish beyond a doubt that the lethal bullet came from the Lieutenant's gun."

"Sure. You fired it. Switched 'em in the dark, back again when you stumbled. Wiped prints, I guess. Good at sleight-of-hand; remember how you switched records under my nose at Chula Negra?"

MacDonald had turned away from the phone. "Nick, are you sure what you're doing? Why should Matteson shoot to kill?"

"Inherits partner's estate."

"But he's a wealthy enough —"

"Not wealth. Partner was thinking of leaving record collection to University; collector like Matteson couldn't see treasures go out of hands."

Mr. Matteson coughed. "How true. I mean, I realise how fortunate it is that Milton died before making that ridiculous testamentary alteration. But granting my motive, my dear alcoholic intellect, how did I know that my secret burglar was my partner?"

"Easy. Put him up to it. He hated cops. O.K. You planned a hoax to make fools of us. We heard you on phone. '*Wait till you see their . . .' faces*, obviously. Even gave time: 10:50. Now 11:05. Unusual time because prompt 10:30 or 11:00 would look too prearranged. Thought quick for record — we saw tonight you know numbers without catalog."

MacDonald was moving casually toward Matteson. Almost imperceptibly the little man edged away. "And the attempted killing of Wilson?"

"Build-up. No intent to harm. You, of course. Tonight Harbrecht as burglar. Pistol with blanks to start us firing. You told him you'd hocus Mac's gun with blanks too. I saw pattern, tried to stop you — just too late."

Mr. Matteson considered the situation gravely. "Speaking as a lawyer," he announced, "I will admit that you have a fine presumptive case. Motive, means, and opportunity are complete. I might be willing — only as a lawyer, you understand — to grant your hypothesis. I should then ask: How in heaven's name can you prove a shred of it?" His mouth twisted with a faint grin of sly triumph.

MacDonald stepped toward him. The automatic was still in Mr. Matteson's hand, and it happened to be pointing at the Lieutenant.

"Dying words," said Nick Noble.

MacDonald stared at him. "That Palmieri gibberish? It meant something?"

Nick Noble held up the booklet in his hand. Its cover said *Tosca*. "Harbrecht was opera fan like you. Thought Palmieri stirred a memory and I checked it. It's in here: Heavy frames fake execution for hero, then frame within a frame — real instead of fake. Heavy gives henchman cue in front of heroine with one sentence — repeated, a fan'd know it — 'Fix it like Count Palmieri. Get me? *Like Palmieri.*' So what does 'Like Palmieri'

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nean when a dying opera fan says it? Means real bullets where you expected blanks."

It was the longest speech MacDonald had ever heard Nick Noble make. It also produced the promptest results. There was no longer any question whether Mr. Matteson's automatic was covering them.

"All right," the little man said tensely. "I still think I could talk a jury out of it; but the trial would finish me professionally. I can't afford it. So . . . get over there. With your hands up."

"Be my Valentine?" MacDonald suggested.

"Exactly, Lieutenant. A massacre. Remember, he was killed by your gun. Very well. You die by this one, which will be found with his fingerprints on it. We all shot it out. I survived with — a shoulder wound, probably. All highly regrettable." The little man's eyes gleamed as though he had suddenly found another hobby quite as fascinating as records.

MacDonald said nothing. His gaze followed every movement of Mr. Matteson's right hand.

"Go on," the little man snapped. "Over there. Get along."

Nick Noble moved obediently. As he moved, his hand caught a corner of the record file and jerked. The file leaned forward, hesitated, rocked back, then forward again. Already in his imagination MacDonald could hear the crash of the records.

Mr. Matteson hurled himself forward. He thrust his slight body in front of the file and propped it up with both hands like Samson at the gates of Gaza. There was the vigor of desperation in his weak muscles. Slowly the record file returned to normal.

With a sigh of relief, Mr. Matteson turned to face MacDonald's gun. Panic-stricken, he grabbed for his own, then saw Nick Noble picking it up from where he had dropped it to save his treasures.

It was some months later that Nick Noble spoke privately to Mamá Gonzales. "That Geyer record," he said. "*Cenicienta*. Remember little man that wanted it?"

"*Pos, ¿cómo no?*"

"Wonder if maybe he could borrow it. They're letting him have a phonograph up at San — where he is. Wrote to Mac he'd like to hear it. You'll get it back O.K.," he added. "He won't have time to wear it out."

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DO YOU KNOW YOUR A. B. C.?

The man who calls himself Anthony Berkeley is one of the most versatile craftsmen in the detective-story field. As "Anthony Berkeley," creator of Roger Sheringham, he writes the pure detective novel of which THE POISONED CHOCOLATES CASE *(1929),* THE SECOND SHOT *(1930), and* TRIAL AND ERROR *(1937) are brilliant examples of modern, natural, deductive story-telling. On the other hand, as "Francis Iles" he writes a tale of a different color — the "inside-out" study of murder usually seen through the eyes of the intended victim, with suspense and mounting horror the literary keynotes in a step-by-step dissection of the events leading up to the tragedy. In this technique Francis Iles is an acknowledged master — witness his classic* BEFORE THE FACT *(1932); true, he did not invent or even introduce this variation, but he did raise it to the peak of development and profoundly influenced every practitioner who followed him. Finally, as A. B. Cox (his real name, by the way) he is a graduate of professional journalism who within the confines of a mere 1000 words can satirize with devilish and double irony the mannerisms of Sherlock Holmes in the manner, believe it or not, of P. G. Wodehouse. See his delicious "Holmes and the Dasher," reprinted in your Editor's suppressed anthology,* THE MISADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES *(1944).*

So the American aficionado has come to expect three different styles from the pen of A. B. C. — unadulterated ratiocination, psychological suspense, and/or journalistic satire. But there is still another facet in the gemlike cutting of Anthony Berkeley's talent: he is also an expert exponent of the gentle art of writing the humorous crime story, the typically British species in which the meek inherit, not the earth, but all the troubles the earth is heir to. A perfect example of this subdivision of the genre is the story we now bring to you — "Mr. Simpson Goes to the Dogs," never before published in the United States.

Meet Mr. Horace Simpson on his first visit to a race track. Meet Mr. Simpson, bank cashier, in his first contact with real crime. Meet Mr. Simpson, all five feet seven of him, with his neatly waxed mustache and his rimless pince-nez, wearing the proverbial bowler, carrying the proverbial umbrella, and poking his proverbial nose into the affairs of other people. The Mr. Simpson of this world, for all his prissy well-meaningness, is ever the Man of Action; but what happened to Mr. Simpson at the dog track really shouldn't happen to a — but that's where you came in, remember?

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MR. SIMPSON GOES TO THE DOGS

by ANTHONY BERKELEY

If Mr. Simpson's wife had not been engaged that evening at her Social Institute, if young Wallace at the bank had not had the impertinence last week to taunt Mr. Simpson with condemning what he knew nothing about, if Mr. Simpson himself had not been feeling unaccountably restless, almost adventurous — well, if none of these things had happened, Mr. Simpson would never have paid that first visit of his to a greyhound racing track to learn for himself. But they did happen, and Mr. Simpson had plenty of cause to regret the fact.

Even then it was only by the merest chance that he saw what he did see. Had he been watching the race, he would have noticed nothing. But Mr. Simpson despised betting; the race seemed to him exactly like the other three which he had already seen; and his eyes had wandered to the little tendrils of fair curls below the black coalheaver hat (though Mr. Simpson did not know it was a coalheaver hat) on the nape of the slender neck in front of him.

Beyond an occasional cheap burglar, the ordinary citizen seldom comes into contact with real crime; even such a citizen as the chief cashier at an important suburban branch of the Southern Counties Bank, with every expectation of the next branch managership that fell vacant, as Mr. Horace Simpson was. So that when Mr. Simpson saw the hand of the girl in front of him dip unobtrusively into the pocket of the man next to her, to emerge clenched as if holding something, it was a second or two before Mr. Simpson realized exactly what the action meant. Then he remembered that the man had been standing there alone when he, Mr. Simpson, took up his own position, that the girl had only drifted along just as the race was beginning, and that no sign of recognition had passed between them. Moreover, from the movements of her elbows the girl now seemed to be transferring an object into her bag; and surreptitiously, for her head was still following the progress of the flying dogs.

"Tch! A pickpocket!" thought Mr. Simpson with distaste, and looked round for a policeman. Mr. Horace Simpson was not the man to be deterred from his duty by a misplaced sense of chivalry.

There was no policeman in sight, and before Mr. Simpson could decide what action to take, the race was over and the crowd on the move.

It did not occur to Mr. Simpson to take no action. He was accustomed to taking action. It was the opinion of the junior clerks at his bank that Mr. Simpson took a good deal too much action, and much of it unnecessarily; but Mr. Simpson cared less than nothing for the opinion of junior clerks.

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A neat plan presented itself to his mind. It was impossible, of course, to warn the man in the presence of the girl that he might have been robbed. Those who live in banks learn caution. Mr. Simpson waited therefore till the girl had turned away. Then, with the tail of his eye on her progress, he drew himself up to his full five feet seven inches, touched his neatly-waxed little mustache, adjusted his rimless pince-nez to a more formidable angle, swelled out his stocky chest (these were Mr. Simpson's invariable preludes to action), and tapped the victim smartly on the shoulder.

"Ah, Jones!" said Mr. Simpson, briskly. "I hardly expected to see you here."

The man jerked round and scowled. "My name is Edwards," he snapped, "not Jones."

"But you live in Acacia Grove, Surbiton?"

"I live in Munster Gardens, Bayswater."

"Then I beg your pardon." With a little bow Mr. Simpson turned and hurried after the miscreant, the name and address of the victim thus docketed for future reference.

The exchange had not taken more than a few seconds, but already the girl was a dozen yards away. Pushing his way round an exasperating loiterer, Mr. Simpson saw the black coalheaver hat and the neat black cloth coat with its collar of lighter fur just disappearing through an opening in an iron fence which extended from grand stand to rails ahead of him. Setting his bowler hat more firmly on his head, he hurried in pursuit. There was no definite plan in his mind. He simply knew that it was his duty as a citizen not to lose sight of the wrongdoer until he could hand his responsibility over to the proper person, a policeman.

Unacquainted with the ways of greyhound racing tracks, Mr. Simpson was unprepared to find the opening through which the girl had passed so easily barred against himself by a large person in uniform.

"Members only this way."

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Simpson with impatience. "But my business is important." He waited.

But the man did not stand aside. "I told you, members only this way."

"And I told you, my business is important. Kindly let me pass at once. I will notify your secretary, or whatever is the correct procedure." Already the girl was disappearing in the throng. Mr. Simpson was ill-advised enough to emphasize his remarks with a jab of his umbrella.

The guardian instantly adopted an attitude of high menace. "Ho, you would, would you? Clear off before I ——"

Mr. Simpson cleared. He was very angry, but he was prudent too.

Fuming, he strutted into a little archway that led underneath the stand he knew not whither. A lesser man might at this point have washed his hands of a matter which after all did not concern him personally. Not so Mr. Horace Simpson. His blood, only halfway up before, mounted. Duty

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was no longer merely duty. It was grim pleasure. For, of course, the girl was responsible for this humiliation.

Mr. Simpson emerged from the tunnel into a broad, covered passage, floored with concrete, which appeared to run along the back of the stands. He looked eagerly up and down it for a policeman.

On the opposite side of the passage was a large wire enclosure, round which horsey-looking men were leading greyhounds in a never-ending circle under pale electric lights. As Mr. Simpson glanced that way he clucked with gratification; for there, leaning against the wire, apparently intent on the procession inside, was someone quite unexpected; someone in a black coalheaver hat and a black cloth coat with a collar of lighter fur.

Desperately Mr. Simpson looked up and down the passage again, but not a policeman was in sight. Nor, for that matter, was anyone else. The grooms were leading their charges for the sole edification of the girl in the coalheaver hat.

Very well; Mr. Simpson would have to deal with the situation himself. He grasped his umbrella sternly and advanced.

"Young woman," frowned Mr. Simpson, "I must tell you that I was standing behind you during the last race, and — that is, I'm afraid I saw what you did."

The somewhat lame conclusion to Mr. Simpson's speech was due to the fact that the startled face which the girl turned upon him was not only a remarkably pretty one, but was covered, too, with tears. She had been crying against the wire there.

Tch! thought Mr. Simpson, embarrassed. Remorse. Well, very proper, no doubt. But no palliative. No; no palliative.

"Oh. . . ." whispered the girl, and shrank back.

Mr. Simpson was glad now that there had been no policeman. Guilt was in the girl's face, certainly; but innocence was, too. Unversed though he was in the ways of the criminal classes, Mr. Simpson knew that this was no hardened thief. She must have been desperate. Starving perhaps. Restitution must be made, of course, but after that Mr. Simpson would look into her case. It would not be unpleasant to help her.

His voice softened. "Was it the first time you've done anything like that?"

She nodded, then gulped. "Yes, it was. And I — did he — send you after me?"

"No, no." Mr. Simpson leaned back on his umbrella. He smiled almost paternally. "In fact, he doesn't even know I've come."

"He doesn't know?" To Mr. Simpson's astonishment the girl drew herself up and eyed him coldly. "Then why are you interfering?"

"My good girl, I told you. I was standing behind. I saw you." Mr. Simpson was nettled. "Perhaps you'd prefer the police to come into it?" he asked, sarcastically.

For a moment the girl stared at him blankly. Then the stricken look re-

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turned to her face, and she shrank back against the wire. "He wouldn't do anything — like that!"

"Indeed, I'm afraid he would." Mr. Simpson pressed his advantage. "Now, be a sensible girl. Come back with me, and we'll see if we can find him. I'm sure you're ready to do the right thing. And afterwards — well, we'll put things straight somehow. Come along."

For a moment it seemed as if the girl was going to yield to his persuasion. She had already taken a step or two forwards.

Then suddenly she turned. "No, I won't! I don't believe you. You're trying to frighten me. I — I think it's abominable of you to interfere. It's nothing to do with you."

"You do prefer the police, then?" Mr. Simpson asked, grimly.

"Oh, I'll take the chance of *that*." With a wild little laugh that was more sob than laugh, she darted back along the passage and up a wide flight of steps that opened on the right. Mr. Simpson darted in pursuit, much annoyed.

At the top of the steps a large man in uniform barred his way into a brilliantly-lighted vestibule, through which the black coalheaver hat was already disappearing.

"Members only this way."

"But it's urgent, my good man." Mr. Simpson shook with impatience and exasperation. "Look here, if half a crown's any good to you ——"

"Sorry, sir, afraid I can't. Members only this way."

"But I tell you I must. That girl who just came in ——"

The guardian's voice became stern and loud. "Now, then, you clear off. I know your sort. 'Op it, *quick!*"

Mr. Simpson hopped it. He was dancing mad, but there was no alternative.

As he walked back along the passage, he fumed. It was the last straw. The girl had had her chance. Duty was more duty than ever.

The crowd was beginning now to drift back to the rails and climb up the high stands for the next race. Mr. Simpson and his umbrella jostled their way back to where the robbery had occurred. If no policeman was available one could at least inform the man Edwards of one's suspicions. Mr. Simpson wished now that he had done so in the first place. The girl's prettiness no longer moved him. She had been trading on it, that was all. Very well.

As he pushed through the little tunnel Mr. Simpson's eye fell on a small blue cardboard disc lying on the ground. Tidily he picked it up. He remembered noticing now that some people had been wearing similar discs in their buttonholes. Some kind of a favor, no doubt. Absently Mr. Simpson fastened the disc to his own lapel, beside the neat metal badge of the South Suburban Cyclists' Club, of which he was the honorary secretary.

The man Edwards was not to be seen near his former station, nor was any policeman. Frowning, Mr. Simpson scanned the crowd. He was not baffled yet. The preparations for the

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next race interested him not a jot. Mr. Simpson was on sterner business bent.

His determination was rewarded. There, not a dozen yards from him, was the girl herself. By this time Mr. Simpson would have known that back anywhere. With incredible effrontery she was placing a bet with a bookmaker. While Mr. Simpson had been battling his way through the crowd, she must have passed at her leisure through the clubhouse and outdistanced him by yards, congratulating herself no doubt on the ease with which she had thrown him off the track. Very well.

Mr. Simpson grasped his umbrella and strode forward.

Yes, there were the tendrils of fair hair, above the fur collar.

But even now Mr. Simpson was disposed to be merciful. He would not humiliate the girl by a public denunciation. He would merely obtain possession of the stolen article, whatever it might be, and post it back the next day to the man Edwards. Who knew? Edwards might be an influential man. He had looked prosperous. Cast your bread upon the waters.

From behind, Mr. Simpson swiftly removed the bag that was tucked under the girl's arm, and said in her ear:

"*I'll* take charge of this for a few minutes. Come with me, please."

The girl was sensible. She made no protest. With the bag under his own arm Mr. Simpson stalked towards the tunnel.

But things were not to be so easy. Bag-snatching requires practice to become unobtrusive, and Mr. Simpson had none. He had not taken half a dozen steps before a loud masculine voice shouted behind him:

"Hi! Stop thief! Bag-snatcher, there! All right, miss, I'll get it back. Stop thief!"

Much annoyed, and disconcerted, too, Mr. Simpson crammed the bag into his overcoat pocket and glanced back. The girl would explain, of course, but this outcry was a nuisance.

A burly man in a weather-beaten trilby hat and a mackintosh was hurrying in Mr. Simpson's wake. Obviously it was he who had shouted. He had the girl by the elbow, too (infernal impertinence!), and was hurrying her along with him. She . . .

Mr. Simpson's mouth drooped open, and a look of horror appeared on his face. The girl's face was strange to him. *He had snatched the wrong bag!*

And then Mr. Simpson regrettably lost his head. Instead of walking back with dignity and explaining, he dived forward.

The man in the mackintosh, still dragging the wrong girl with him, dived, too. Mr. Simpson's dive became a nightmare flight, that of the couple behind him a hideous pursuit. Mr. Simpson's short legs pounded along. He was running now for far more than dear life: for reputation, wife, and future.

Already hands were stretched out upon him, though somehow he shook them off. The entrance to the tunnel was barred by curious bodies. Mr. Simpson swerved past it, and contin-

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ued along the straight. A fat man lay in wait in his path. Mr. Simpson drove the ferrule of his umbrella into his stomach and passed on.

To his dismay he realized that he had been making blindly for that same gap in the iron fence from which he had been turned away so ignominiously twenty minutes ago. But it was too late to swerve again. The prospect either way was equally hopeless, but Mr. Simpson ran on. He could not stop.

Luck was with him. Before he had come close enough to the guardian for that large man to realize that a hunt was up, the lights in the stands went out, to be replaced by the illumination on the track itself. Mr. Simpson's impetus carried him past the man in uniform almost before he realized. In point of fact, the man in uniform made no attempt to stop him. He seemed to glance merely at Mr. Simpson's lapel in the dim light, and then take no further interest. But he did stop the couple behind, effectively. Mr. Simpson could hear the man's protests as he fled, almost sobbing with relief, into the safety of the crowd inside and pretended, with bursting lungs, to be interested in nothing but the race that was being run.

By degrees Mr. Simpson recovered control of himself. He had been very fortunate; no blunder now must mar his luck. The bag was still burning a hole in his pocket. The first thing to do, obviously, was to get rid of it.

With a rapid sidling movement Mr. Simpson edged towards a large building which topped the members' stand behind him. That must be the clubhouse, and it must lead through to the vestibule and the flight of steps which opened into the covered passage in the rear; and that was the way he must escape after getting rid of the bag. It would be highly imprudent, of course, to show himself anywhere near the iron fence. The guardian there would have been warned that he was a —— Mr. Simpson shivered. Dear, dear, dear, this was all extremely distasteful.

As he sidled through the throng he edged the bag out of his pocket and let it drop gently to the ground.

A charming girl in a black coalheaver hat picked it up and gave it back to him. "You dropped this," she smiled.

"Oh — er — th-thank you," stammered Mr. Simpson.

For a second he had had a nasty shock when he saw the hat. But only for a second. For, using his eyes then for the first time, he realized that he was entirely surrounded by black coalheaver hats. Every other girl on the ground must be wearing one. And many, many of them were wearing, too, black cloth coats with collars of lighter fur. Bitterly and comprehensively Mr. Simpson cursed the lack of originality in feminine fashions which had led him to disaster.

The race over, the members' stand was emptying now. Mr. Simpson turned into it and pushed his way against the crowd till he reached the deserted half. There he sat down on a

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ench, worked the bag out of his ocket, took off his hat, and placed oth hat and bag on the floor under he bench. After a minute he retrieved he hat, got up, and made for the tail f the crowd.

"Hi!" cried a raucous voice four ows behind. "Hi, mister!"

Reluctantly Mr. Simpson looked ound.

"You've forgotten something," outed the man. "Under the seat. here! No, further back. Yes, that's . . . . You'd forgotten it."

"Thank you," said Mr. Simpson, ithout gratitude.

"He'd forgotten it," explained the an to the young woman beside him.

"Yes, I thought he'd forgotten it," greed the young woman.

They beamed at each other.

Scowling, Mr. Simpson crammed he bag back into his pocket and with-rew.

It was still burning a hole there as he limbed wearily up the last flight of eps into the clubhouse. The entrance d straight into a long bar. Mr. Simp-on was not sorry. Bars normally eant little to him, but the sight of ne now was welcome. He subsided hankfully onto a stool and asked for whisky and soda.

Crouched over his glass, he re-iewed the position. It was absurd to el dejected. Luck on the whole had een with him. As for the bag, it was stock joke that one can never get id of an unwanted article in a crowded lace. But after all, there is always omewhere to leave it without attract-ing notice. Mr. Simpson leaned across the bar to pose a question.

But the barman was busy with a newcomer at Mr. Simpson's elbow. "Whisky and soda, sir?" he was saying. "Yessir."

Mr. Simpson glanced round, annoyed. The next instant his head shot back again. But it was too late.

"Hul-*lo!*" said the man in the mackintosh.

Mr. Simpson hunched his head, tortoise-like, into his coat.

"Well, fancy running into you," said the man in the mackintosh. He smote Mr. Simpson jovially on the shoulder, then leaned forward and breathed into his ear. "Smart bit o' work, that of yours, ole man. Sorry I nearly upset the apple-cart."

Somewhat dazed, Mr. Simpson sat up. The man smiled at him in a friendly way. "Here, finish that up. The next's on me. Boy, another of the same for this gentleman."

Mechanically Mr. Simpson did as he was bid.

"Been on the job long?" asked the man in the mackintosh, in a cautious undertone.

Mr. Simpson shivered. "No, sir. I have not."

"Is that so? Neat bit o' work that was then, for an amachoor."

The whisky and soda had done Mr. Simpson good. He drew himself up with some dignity. "Kindly leave me alone, sir. I am not, as you appear to think, a criminal."

"No?" The man in the mackintosh guffawed coarsely. "Just a hobby, I

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suppose. Some collects stamps, and some snatches bags. Well, that's O.K. by me, chum."

Mr. Simpson drew his stool away. The man drew his after it. Mr. Simpson was more agitated than he would allow himself to show. This was a dreadful fix he was in. Dreadful. . . . Discovery would mean ruin. Sheer, blank ruin. A bank has no place for bag-snatchers, however laudable their motives. If he ever got out of this mess Mr. Simpson vowed that he would never, never concern himself again in other people's affairs.

"Still got the goods?" whispered the man in the mackintosh.

Mr. Simpson groaned aloud.

"What's up, cully?"

Mr. Simpson took a desperate decision. The man's tone had sounded unexpectedly sympathetic, and Mr. Simpson craved sympathy.

"I — I am in a serious predicament," he gulped. "If you could advise me, I should be grateful." Without more ado he plunged into his story.

The man listened critically. "Sounds a bit thin to me, old man," he opined, when Mr. Simpson had finished.

"I realize that," Mr. Simpson said, despondently. "Nevertheless I pledge my word it is the truth. And I was thinking that if you would — er — relieve me of the bag, and — and deliver it to the proper authorities, of course — and perhaps accept a small honorarium for your trouble, say a pound note — say two pounds — say five pounds — say all I could conveniently afford," blurted out Mr. Simpson in desperation, as the man continued to look at him fixedly.

The man removed his gaze, but showed no sign of having understood Mr. Simpson's suggestion. "Another girl wearing one of those coalheaving hats, eh?" he remarked, thoughtfully.

Mr. Simpson mechanically followed the new direction of his companion's eyes. The next instant he jumped off his stool with a cry of joy. "That's the one! That's the girl. She'll corroborate what I told you. She must! Kindly wait a moment." He hurried along the bar.

The girl was standing at the farther end in conversation with a young man. She was looking prettier than ever, but Mr. Simpson had no thought for that. He would have liked to shield her, before her companion, but that was no longer possible.

The girl saw him coming and, with a little cry, ran to meet him, both hands outstretched. "Oh, I *am* so glad," she bubbled, before Mr. Simpson could say a word. "I did take your advice, you see. Jack, this is the dear little man I told you about, who followed me and scolded me into making it up with you."

Mr. Simpson found his inert hand crushed in the young man's. "Sportsman, sir!" The young man clapped him heavily on the back. "Have a drink."

"He threatened all sorts of things, darling," giggled the girl. "He said men had killed themselves for love before now."

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"I — I didn't," feebly interposed Mr. Simpson.

"Oh, well, you said something about the police; so, of course, I thought of as-ovens at once. What did you mean, then?"

"It doesn't matter," said Mr. Simpson, and crept away.

He realized at last what a colossal fool he had made of himself. It had been just a lovers' quarrel. What he had seen was the girl dropping her ring into the man's pocket, not taking something out. And in his officiousness — no, that did not fit, either, because the young man was certainly not Edwards.

"Something's gone a bit wrong, hasn't it?" The voice of the man in the mackintosh had a new note of sternness.

"I, — I made a mistake," Mr. Simpson muttered.

"I'll say you did. Well, I'll have a word now with your two pals. You stop here."

Mr. Simpson stopped. The authority with which the man in the mackintosh was now speaking had given him a horrible suspicion that made his throat go dry and his knees wobble. Out of the corner of his eye he watched the trio. There was no laughter now. The man in the mackintosh was asking questions, and the other two were answering.

"A wh-whisky and soda, p-please," quavered Mr. Simpson to the barman.

But he was not destined to drink it. The man in the mackintosh came striding back with a gait that was almost military. He clapped a hand on Mr. Simpson's shoulder, and Mr. Simpson's flesh leapt and crawled under it as if the hand had been of red-hot iron.

"I am a police officer," he said, with no suggestion now of a Cockney twang. "Here's my warrant-card. I arrest you on a charge of stealing a lady's hand bag, and I warn you. . . ."

How they reached the police station Mr. Simpson never quite knew. Sometimes he thought they had walked, sometimes he seemed to have memories of a musty taxi-cab. All he did remember was how during the journey he wept, for perhaps the first time for thirty years, and how difficult it was to prevent the detective from seeing.

The actual police station, however, always remained very clearly in Mr. Simpson's memory. The bare charge room, the uninterested sergeant taking down the particulars which the detective dictated (Detective-Inspector Partridge, it appeared now, was the name of the man in the mackintosh), the constables looking so undressed without their helmets, even the almanac printed in red which hung, the only decoration, on the bare whitewashed walls.

"Not guilty," Mr. Simpson exclaimed wildly at intervals. "I have a perfect answer. This is all a mistake. It may have grave consequences. I insist on ——"

"You keep your trap shut, son," the sergeant would advise, not unkindly.

In his daze of despair it did not astonish Mr. Simpson to find himself

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confronted, a few minutes later, with the owner of the bag, nor to hear the detective-inspector say, in unctuous and complacent tones:

"There you are, miss. That's the man who got your bag. We haven't searched him yet. We want you as a witness that it was found on him." He nodded to the two helmetless constables.

One of them briskly extracted the bag from Mr. Simpson's coat pocket, and handed it to the sergeant.

Mr. Simpson, though he may not have known it, was gazing at his victim with a look of mute misery that would have melted a heart in a statue. To his incredulous joy the young woman, who had been looking at him stonily, answered his gaze with an understanding smile and said, in the coolest possible way:

"Oh, no. There must be some mistake. That isn't my bag."

"Then you don't charge him, miss?" asked the sergeant, as if it was all a matter of indifference to *him*.

"Certainly not. I've never seen this man before." And the admirable young woman flashed another understanding smile towards the now exuberant Mr. Simpson.

But his exuberance was short-lived.

"Never mind," interposed the detective-inspector, brusquely. "I'm a witness to the theft, and I identify both parties. Besides, this man's already confessed to me." He turned to Mr. Simpson and spoke with rough kindness. "Better come clean, old man. Tell the sergeant the story you told me, and admit that it was this lady's bag you took in error, and I'm not saying but what you mightn't get off scot free."

"Don't you believe him!" The young woman spoke urgently and, if it must be admitted, shrilly. "He's trying to trap you. Don't you say a word."

But Mr. Simpson was a broken man. He knew he had said too much already not to say more. And truth must prevail. The magistrate at least would believe him, if these men did not.

"It's true," he muttered. "I took it, by mistake. But ——"

"And you identify this woman as the woman from whom you took the bag?"

"Don't answer!" surprisingly shrieked the young woman. "You fool, it's a trap. Don't answer!"

But Mr. Simpson had already answered. "I do," he said.

The detective-inspector rubbed his hands and glanced at the sergeant. The sergeant rubbed his and glanced at the constables.

"And you identify her, too," pursued the inspector, "as the woman behind whom you stood during the third race?"

"No, I — I fear not. I never saw that woman's face."

The young woman sneered.

"Well, to substantiate your story can you offer any clue by which you could identify the woman behind whom you stood? Any distinctive feature in the dress, body marks peculiarities of gait or carriage?"

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"I don't think so," replied Mr. Simpson, humbly. "Wait though." A memory came back to him of fair curls on a slender neck. And on the left of the slender neck there had been — yes, a mole. "She had a mole on the left of the back of her neck."

To Mr. Simpson's amazement the owner of the bag suddenly began to scream at him. "You pie-faced idiot! You fat bit of dirt! I tried to do you a good turn, didn't I, you dam' squeaker? My gawd, it's a bit thick to ——"

The inspector nodded to the sergeant, the sergeant nodded to the constables. "Put her in No. 4," he said, laconically.

Amid shrieks and strange oaths the young woman made an ignominious exit. Neither the inspector nor the sergeant took the slightest notice of the bewildered Mr. Simpson.

"Now for it," muttered the former; and opening the bag, he inverted it over the sergeant's desk. A shower of small articles clattered down onto the wood.

The inspector pounced on a little package in a twist of brown paper, and undid it. The next moment two huge emeralds were winking greenly on his large palm.

"Ah!" breathed the inspector and the sergeant in unison.

Mr. Simpson looked on in bewilderment.

The inspector wheeled round on him. "You saw that, sir? You can witness to what we found in that bag?"

"Er — yes. You found those — are they really emeralds?"

"They are that, sir. Whoppers, too, eh?" The inspector suddenly seized Mr. Simpson's hand and pumped it vigorously. "And that's what she took out of Edwards' pocket, under your nose — though his name isn't Edwards. In fact, Mr. —— we still don't know your name, but we're very much in your debt."

"But — but what —— ?"

"It's like this," the inspector in the mackintosh explained. "Those earrings were stolen from a very important house last week. A *very* important house. We were right in the dark; hadn't got the foggiest notion who'd done the job. But we got the tip that they were going to be passed on at that meeting tonight. So I took some men and went. Not much hope, but I did.

"Well, who should I see there after a bit but Sally Reeves. Sally didn't know me, but I knew her. (That's Sally, by the way, in No. 4 now.) So I hung around. Actually she must have had the goods in her bag then, but I didn't know that, though I guessed she might. In fact, I was meditating doing a bit of quiet bag-snatching myself, on spec, though it might have been risky. Anyhow, when you grabbed it I jumped at the chance, and had her brought along here while I went after you. Of course, I knew your story was true as soon as I heard it, and ——"

"But you pretended to disbelieve me," said Mr. Simpson, hurt.

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The inspector winked. "I had to get you here, too, sir, and I thought you'd act the part a bit better if you didn't know too much. But that isn't all you did for us. Thanks to you, we can lay our hands on the man who did the job. No, his name isn't Edwards, but he does live in Munster Gardens, and your description of him clinches it. Funny what people will give away, isn't it? By the way, you'd better let us have your name and address now, sir, and then you can go."

"Ah!" said Mr. Simpson, cautiously. "But if you're preferring no charge against me . . . I really don't care you know, to be mixed up in ——"

"Charge?" said the inspector. "Certainly not, sir." A dreamy look came over his face. "But there's a pretty big reward out for information leading to the recovery of these stones, sir. From the help you've given us I wouldn't wonder if you came in for a nice slice of it, if not the lot."

"My name," said Mr. Simpson briskly, "is Simpson. Horace Simpson. I live at ——"

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they don't look very much like real rockets. Their noses are hemispheres or parabolas of revolution; a parabola of revolution happens to be a "constant pressure" shape for low-speed flight. The drag of these blunt-nosed shapes is 40-60% *less* than a slim cone or supersonic ogive. Bodies on model rockets are longer to give higher Reynolds Numbers and less drag, as well as greater fin moments.

Model rocket fins attempt to harness span-wise air flow for greater effectiveness and lower induced drag; fin airfoils have rounded leading edges and tapered trailing edges in an attempt to maintain laminar flow over them at high angles of attack. Surfaces on models are shiny and smooth, sometimes waxed, to provide a slick finish that will forestall turbulent boundary layer separation leading to increased drag.

Some models use boundary layer control devices such as fences to prevent flow around their bodies at an angle of attack. In fact, one young man designed a perfectly good finless model rocket utilizing flow fences around the tail to straighten out the flow in that region. Advanced modelers are also paying great attention to fin-body fillets to reduce interference drag between the body and the fins.

This is all great fun, of course. There may never be any practical commercial use for what model rocketeers are learning about low-speed ballistic flight. *But who cares?* The research we have all done has allowed altitude records to increase by nearly one hundred per cent. With one pound-second of total impulse, it is now possible to put a two-ounce model rocket over thirteen hundred feet in the air. Stability of models at launch has improved tremendously, and spot-landing contests are becoming interesting. We are using our hobby of model rocketry to learn things that nobody else has bothered to tackle.

Another example of the different shape of a subsonic rocket from that of a supersonic rocket. Although not as aesthetic in appearance, the left-hand model was designed to fly in the low subsonic regime, in contrast to the right-hand model which is patterned after supersonic rockets.

As I mentioned above, we still don't have all the answers to the problems we, as amateur scientsts, have set for ourselves. We do not even know if we are on the right track. Perhaps some aerodynamicist with an interest in low-speed flight could give us some tips, providing he will pardon my reference to aerodynamics are an arcane art.

I often wonder what other areas have been by-passed by professional endeavor because of lack of promising reward, technological sophistication, or interest. Low-speed aerodynamics happens to be only one of those areas. In our search for information, we are re-investigating the work done by the aeronautical pioneers—the Wrights, Langley, Lilienthal, Pilcher, Chanute, and others—in an at-

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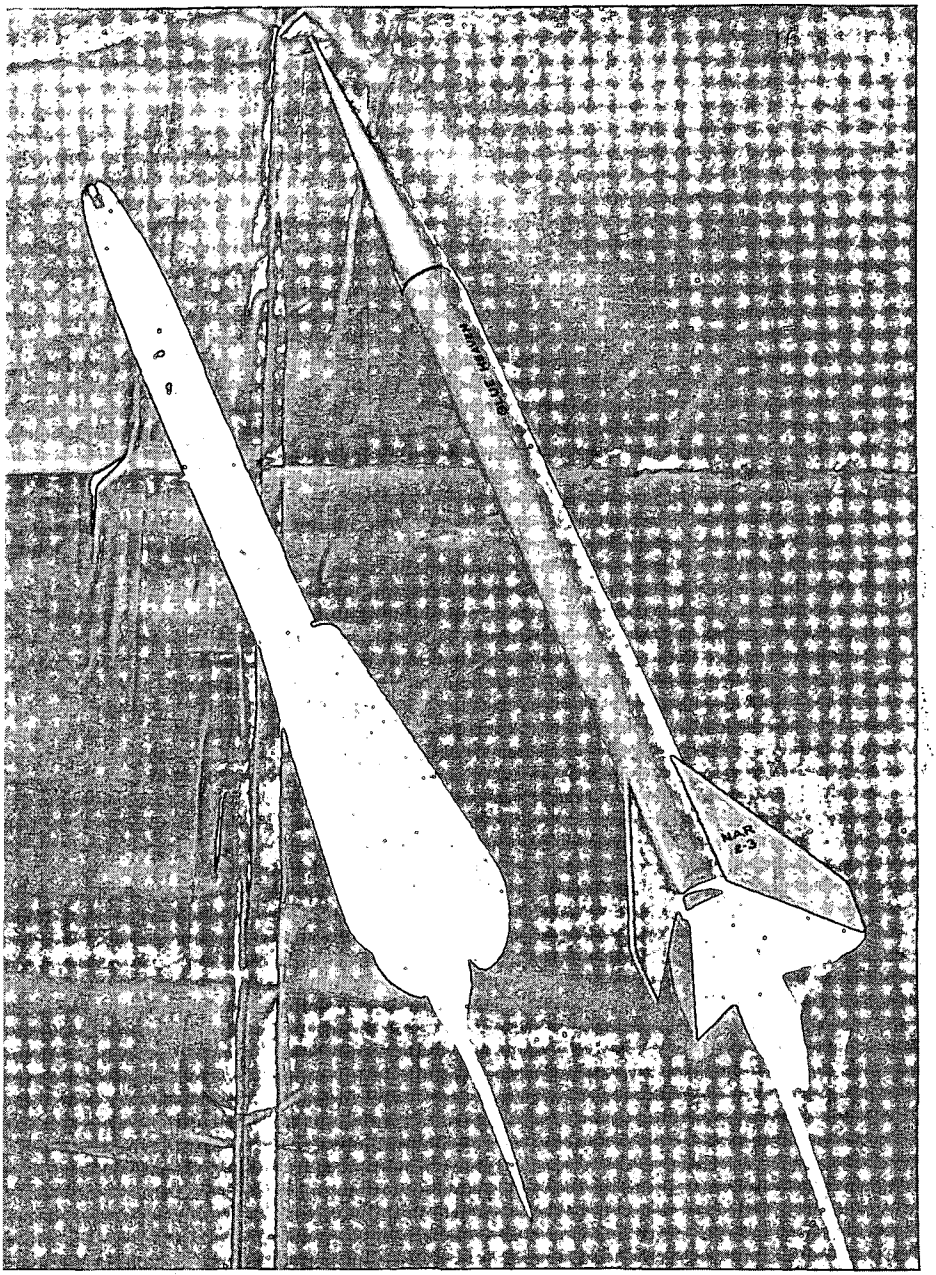

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tempt to rediscover what they learned about low-speed flight and whether or not they ever discarded an avenue of approach which would be practical today.

The factor that spurred this investigation is the history of technology itself. The first wireless receivers were solid-state units—the "coherers" of Marconi and Lodge-Muirhead; electronics engineers did not "rediscover" solid-state electronics until they had raised DeForest's vacuum triode to a high pitch of perfection. The same can be said for the work of Nichola Tesla, whose "earth current" communications are being finally developed today as un-jammable military communications systems. Kelvin's work is being critically re-examined because of the present surge in infra-red technology.

Therefore, are we missing something in low-speed flight, experimental data, or techniques, that has already been worked out?

And: In what other fields are we overlooking work that has been done before?

I happen to be amateuring in low-speed aerodynamics because I have a hobby that requires an understanding of it. I am questioning only for the sake of the answer in this endeavor. We have no real understanding of the field yet. Model rockets happen to be a very small part of it. Consider the aerodynamics of bird flight; we haven't solved that one *yet*, and we've been at it since Leonardo da Vinci over five hundred years ago. We labor to build VTOL and STOL aircraft with hummingbirds, insects, and other feathered friends pulling it off right in front of us. We have flight, but in a fast, muscly, noisy manner.

This last is best illustrated by the story of the two sea gulls at Cape Canaveral watching an *Atlas* ICBM blast off. "Just look at that thing go!" exclaimed one. The other sea gull was unperturbed: "You'd fly fast, too, if you were on fire where that thing is!"

I hope that these by-passed, ignored, unprofitable, un-investigated areas of science and technology receive some attention. It could possibly make the difference in the outcome of our technological war with the Soviet Union. It would seem logical that these areas would be the ones for amateur science to look into. Indeed, perhaps only amateur science *can* investigate these areas, because many of them cannot be tackled by professionals due to their nature. There are other problems, which I will discuss in a later article, concerning the quandry of the amateur scientist when he *does* come up with something highly useful to our society . . . and particularly to the government.

The basic difference between supersonic and subsonic rocket shapes is clear in this photograph showing a supersonic-shape model rocket at left and a subsonic-shape model at right. Neither is faster than Mach-0.2, yet right-hand model flies better and higher. Right-hand model was the first model rocket incorporating a workable, low-drag, jet-pump thrust augmenter.

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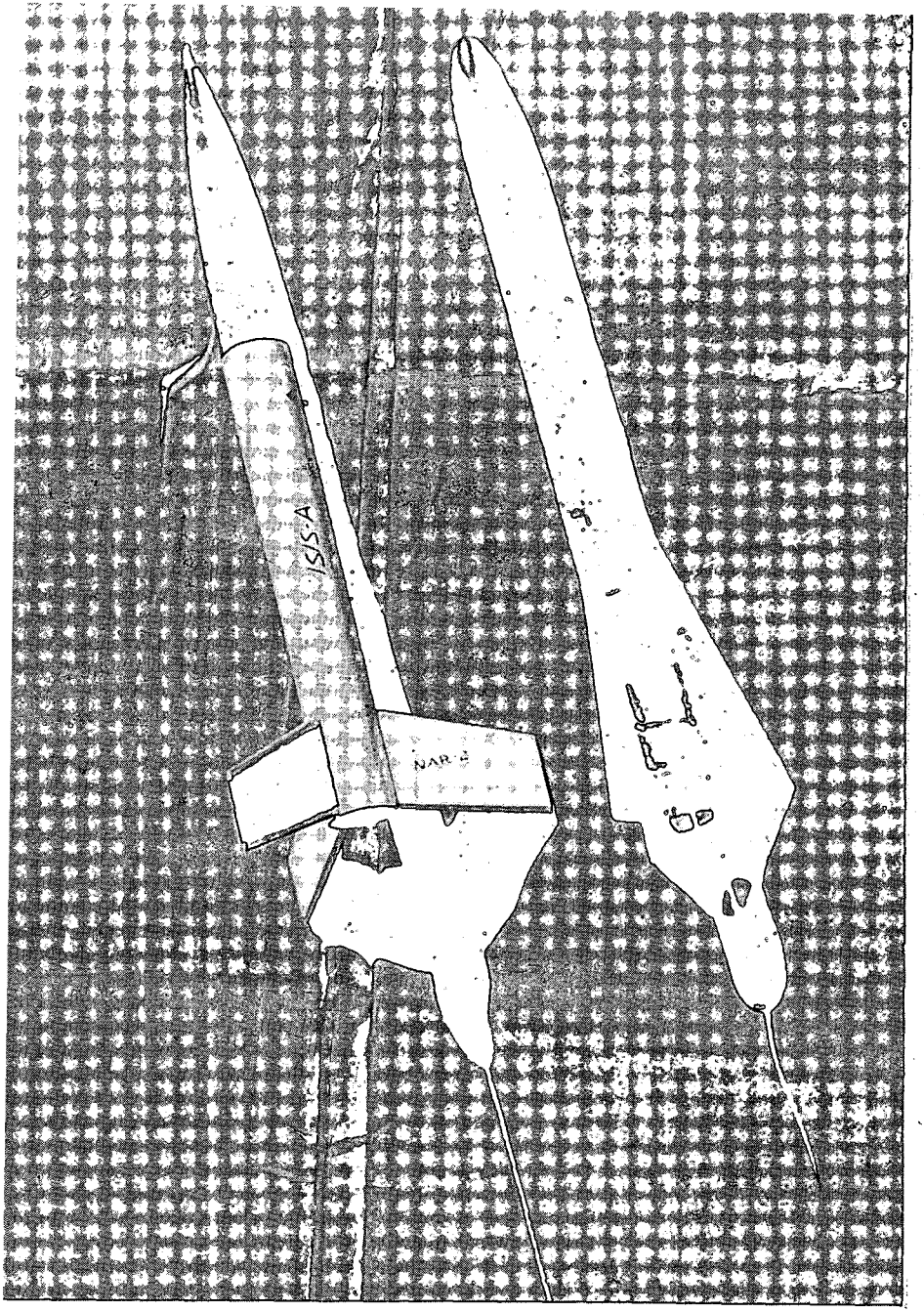

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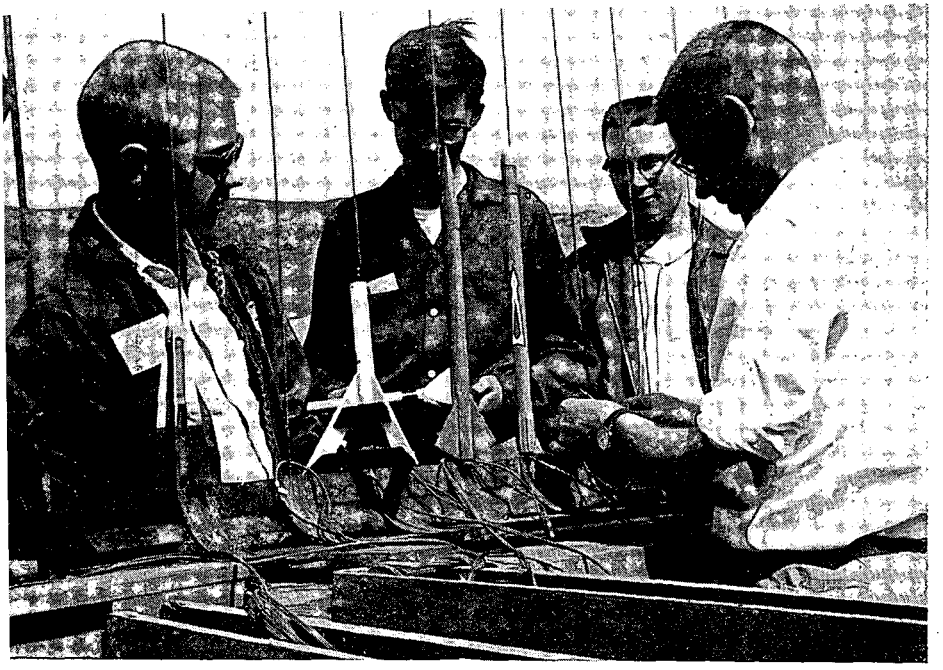

A group of model rocket hobbyists prepare their creations for flight. Ignition of the commercial model rocket engines in each model is done electrically; the launching rods provide initial guidance. All models incorporate a recovery system. Note the various airframe designs being tried out by this NAR group near Denver.

Be that as it may for the moment, the aerodynamics of sub-mach model rockets gives me great satisfaction, lots of fun, and an interesting challenge. And, after all, who could want more from a scientific hobby?

REFERENCES

There aren't many references in this field, particularly with regard to the aerodynamics of model rocketry. Various "Technical Reports" of the National Association of Rocketry contain some data. Back issues of Street & Smith's *American Modeler* magazine have scattered information on low-speed flight. One of the most complete sources of all information on drag is a book, "Fluid Dynamic Drag," by Dr. Sighard F. Hoerner, privately published by the author at 148 Busteed Drive, Midland Park, New Jersey. If you want more information, you'll have to get it yourself through experiments or wait a few years until we can publish more of our own data.

THE END

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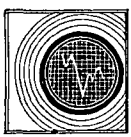
AN INTRODUCTION TO THE CALCULUS OF DESK-CLEARING

By MAURICE PRICE

Since the introduction of Parkinson's Law, many other researchers have started serious studies of the dynamics of Organizational and Administrative Systems. Mr. Price has, we feel, a valuable, if somewhat unclear, contribution.



NE of the more fascinating aspects of modern mathematics is its ability to cope with hitherto unpredictable actions of daily life. Our very life spans are now pre-ordained by the actuary. It is obvious that a relatively simple operation such as desk-clearing is amenable to an equally rigorous analysis. So, here we go . . .

It is convenient to divide desk-clearing into a number of phases, since this refinement will enable us to assess the problem more accurately. It will first be necessary to consider the process by which the chaos reaches that pinnacle demanding a clearing operation.

Assume a desk A of standard proportions. Let it be completely clear of every possible encumberance. The top is glinting under the fluorescent light. The chair is neatly drawn up before it. All drawers are empty. This is the new-born world which forms the theater of our analysis. The desk A is placed precisely between two others called B and D. These neighboring desks are assumed to be

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in an average state of confusion C_0.

Our time measurement starts from t_0, the moment when the new engineer, E arrives at his desk A. There is an initial transient period in which his fellow engineers and other generators of memos learn his name. Until E is known to a wide enough circle, his desk will remain free of reports, memos, requests, time cards, mysterious telephone messages, et cetera. There is an additional variable delay during which E fills all the drawers and covers a good part of the surface of A with his private collection of books, technical notes, catalogues, slide rules, drawing instruments, graphs, nomograms, telephone numbers, stationery and so forth. None of these will ever be of use to him, but they play a vital role in the cycle of confusion.

As we are interested only in the steady-state solution, the transient period ending at t_1 will be ignored. When it has subsided, the normal cycle of confusion begins to operate. The desk is at an initial level of confusion C_1. The confusion rises exponentially along a b (see Fig.1), reaching a critical point at b, where the desk surface is completely covered. From b to c, the exponential rise of confusion continues with steeper slope as the papers pile up in the vertical direction. At c we have reached the stagnation point of equilibrium. No work on past projects can be carried out since all the relevant papers are buried. No new work can be started as all the necessary directions and information are just not noticed. At this point the engineer is reduced to fishing old technical journals from the pile and actually reading them. This is known as "keeping up with the state of the art," and persists up to point d, where the thought first occurs to him to clear the desk.

So revolutionary an idea takes from d to e to sink in. At e there is a great flurry of activity marking the beginning of desk-clearing. The confusion drops rapidly to point f, and ends with a slower drop to g. The final point g forms the new initial level of confusion for the next cycle. Region c to e is a state of constant confusion. (The reader should ignore the fauna which have crept into Fig. 1. They merely prove that not all science is dry as dust.)

Several important conclusions follow from Fig. 1. The equation for each of the four exponential portions is of the form

$$C = K_1 \exp K_2 t$$

In this equation, K_1 is the constant of confusion and K_2 is the coefficient of chaos. These may vary from desk to desk and from engineer to engineer, but the general form of the curve is not altered. Note that the amount of work to be done does not affect the curve at all. This is because the amount of work expands to overflow the avalable desk area, a theorem which can be derived from Parkinson's results.

The initial level of confusion C_1 is slightly higher for each cycle, as is the stagnation point c. This means

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that successive cycles fall inside an exponentially increasing envelope. Eventually the time must be reached when the initial level of confusion is too high for any work to be done at all. The only cure is to promote the engineer. This gives him a new desk so that the process can start all

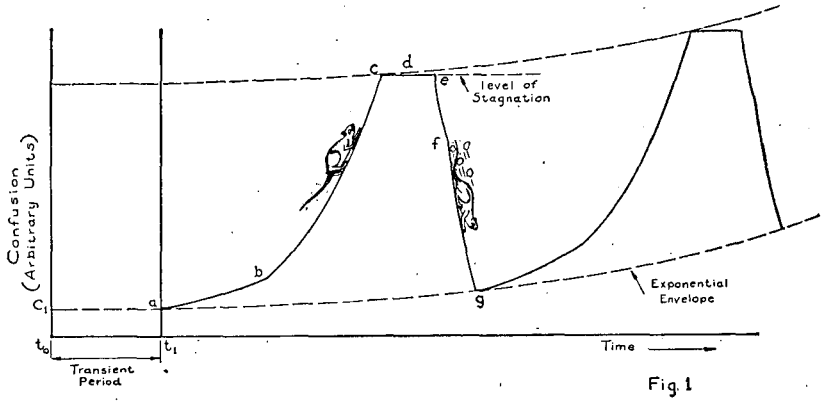

Fig. 1

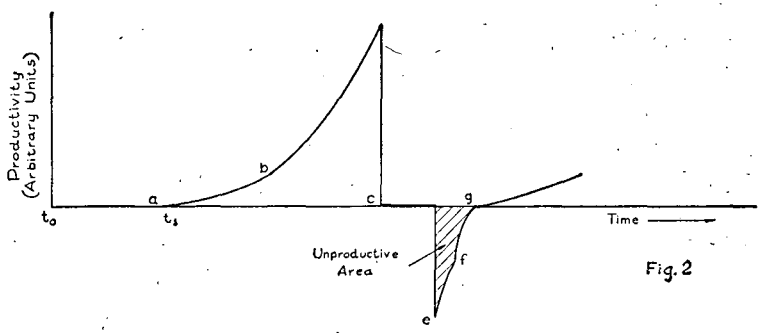

Fig. 2

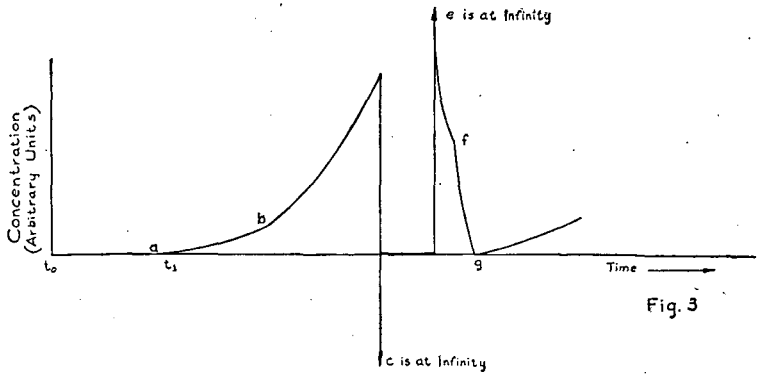

Fig. 3

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over again. If a promotion is not forthcoming, the engineer becomes bored. He will look for another job, giving as his reason that "opportunities for advancement are lacking and the work is not stimulating."

It is informative to plot the slope of the curve of confusion, as has been done in Fig. 2. The exponential portions of Fig. 1 give rise to similar exponential parts in Fig. 2, but there is a negative section during the desk-clearing process. The state of constant confusion has zero slope. Fig. 2 is clearly a curve of productivity. Note that the engineer is most productive when his desk is most chaotic. It must be the aim of management to cut the negative part of the productivity curve to a minimum. Increasing the desk size does no good, but increasing the diameter of the waste-paper basket is effective.

The slope of Fig. 2 is the second derivative of Fig. 1 and is plotted in Fig. 3. Again the exponential portions are present, but we have infinite points at the start and finish of the level of constant confusion. The new curve of Fig. 3 is undoubtedly a graph of concentration. It bears a startling resemblance to the Bilkley-Moss experiments with rats in a maze. Concentration is intimately connected with the degree of chaos. If company procedures are introduced to reduce chaos and improve communication between groups, the productivity and the concentration are bound to suffer.

We must now refer to that extreme body of men who clear their desks to an inordinate state of tidiness at the end of each day. It is obvious that their curves of productivity and concentration will be negligibly small, with the negative areas too large. They are unable to reach the heights of chaos necessary for efficient work. Parkinson has also proved this point by a different approach on the corporate level. Tidiness is anathema to industry.

What is the cure for this inevitable desk-clearing cycle? How can we avoid a state of constant confusion? It is simple. The engineer should bring his desk to the state of stagnation as soon as possible. From then on, the desk should be ignored completely. All work must be carried out by telephone. Not even a phone directory is needed, as the operator can be consulted for numbers. Only the most effective engineers can operate in this highly advanced manner. The rest will resign. The company then retains only the most productive personnel and will forge ahead. The atmosphere of individual initiative and responsibility so achieved is the result of not writing anything down. It is impossible to produce in any other way.

THE END

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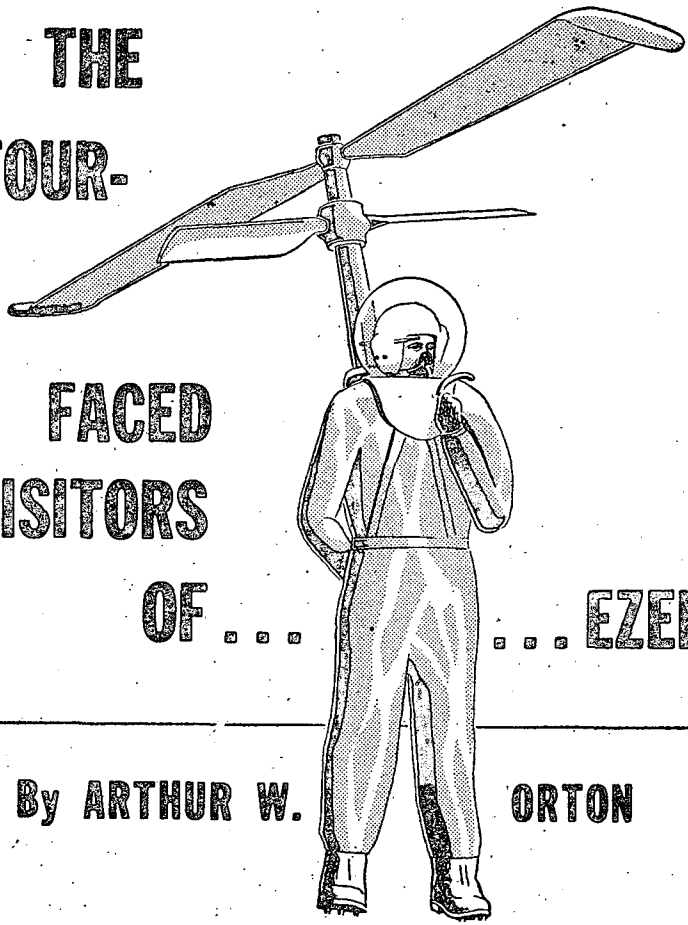
THE FOUR-FACED VISITORS OF . . . . . EZEKIEL



By ARTHUR W. ORTON

Ezekiel, they say, "saw de wheel"—but he saw somewhat more than that. And Orton suggests that what he saw made perfectly good sense . . . to the understanding!

Illustrated by Orton

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E ARE told from our Sunday School days that the Bible is a "living book," the oldest of man's written works that is read and used anew, from generation to generation. It remains "living" because we are able to find new meaning to fit our daily lives. Although it is not the usual kind of new meaning, I believe that I have found something of the sort in the very old prophesies of Ezekiel.

Bible scholars have long recognized the first chapter of Ezekiel as a strange and nearly unfathomable account of a vision. I suggest that it is strange only because it is written by a man far removed from us in time and experience, about a subject totally unfamiliar to men of his time. I do not think that this was a vision in the usual sense, nor was it meant to be mystical. This particular chapter has been called "Science fiction in the Bible" and many attempts have been made to unravel the meaning of the original author, along both spiritual and mundane lines. I am convinced that this chapter is the account of an actual happening; the landing of extraterrestial beings, reported by a careful, truthful and self-possessed observer.

I am not a student of theology and therefore you may feel that I am being presumptive in attempting to throw light on a mystery as old and well-studied as Ezekiel's first chapter. I feel that any success that I may have in doing so will be due to the accident of my birth at the very beginning of an era when the events I have to describe are fact, or are about to become fact.

If, as I believe, this is an account of an actual encounter with men from space, I may be better able to interpret the meaning than a student of theology, who by training and interest, is looking for a theological meaning. I have worked with mechanical things, and as an instructor of aircraft mechanics for most of my adult life. During this time I have had to untangle a lot of mechanical misconceptions and misunderstandings. I think that this gives me some insight into this problem.

If you are not too familiar with the Old Testament, I suggest that you read through the first chapter of Ezekiel to get the feeling of the flow of words and a general idea of what sort of material we will be covering. If you have done a considerable amount of reading in the Bible, I am sure you will notice at once how different and "un-Bible-like" this chapter sounds. It isn't long. The first chapter covers little more than one page. Don't expect to get a clear picture the first time through. It seems to have an elusive quality. About the time you feel that you have hold of a fact, it seems to be contradicted in a later verse. I am going to try to show you that this is due to your own preconceived notions of what some of the words and phrases mean. You, not Ezekiel, are supplying the contradictions.

You will see that I am not going to make excuses for the words, as

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written. It is my belief that those who had the task of translating the Bible from it's original tongue and recopying it through the ages were particularly careful of this chapter because they did not understand it and were afraid of damaging it.

Let us begin with the first verse of chapter one:

The Book of The Prophet
EZEKIEL

803. Chapter 1

Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.
2. In the fifth day of the month, which was the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity,
3. The word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the Lord was there upon him.

This fixes the location of this incident on the outskirts of Bagdad. The Chebar is sometimes called "The Grand Canal of Bagdad." Although the entire book was supposed to have been written by Ezekiel, the second and third verses sound like an editor's note, inserted by a later writer.

4. And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire.

Here is a man who had lived most of his life in arid desert country. He had probably seen whirlwinds of all kinds, from dust-devils to full-scale tornadoes. He was an accurate and honest observer, as we shall see later. If he said it was a whirlwind, it must have really been one, or at least it looked enough like one to fool him for a while. Notice that he does not say that it was high in the air, or that it came out of the sky, but, ". . . out of the north," or toward him from the north.

The first thing that he noticed was that it had fire associated with it, a strange companion for a whirlwind. There is something strange about the fire itself. He says that it "infolds itself," which suggests a fire of more active nature than Ezekiel would be accustomed to. The association of fire and whirlwind must have struck him as peculiar.

Also something amber colored was associated with the cloud and fire. He said that this color came "out of the midst," which might mean that it was above the cloud and flame, or appeared as the fire and cloud subsided, or blew to one side. Considering the detail he gives in later verses, this is quite vague, as it might be if he saw it from a distance.

5. Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man.

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Why didn't he say that out came four men? Remember that he is telling this to very primitive, superstitious people. He was himself bred in a time when the supernatural was taken for granted. Under these conditions he has gone about as far as he could by saying that they certainly looked like four men. He does not say here that he took them for angels or any other kind of supernatural beings.

6. And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings.

This short verse is very clear, yet you wonder how a creature with four faces and four wings could possibly be taken for a man, even by you or me.

Although he does not say so, we can imply that these creatures must have advanced much closer to him after they got out of the fire and cloud, for him to be able to see so much detail.

Imagine the courage it took for him to stay put in order to observe these creatures. Notice also how objective he is, never mentioning his own feelings.

7. And their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot; and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass.

Each verse of the description covers one or two parts of the creatures. When Ezekiel mentions more than one part it becomes confusing, so that one verse seems to contradict another. These can usually be sorted out however. Nowhere will you find a direct contradiction.

Here he is describing the feet only. The word "straight" can be taken several ways. Does he mean *regular feet,* or feet that point straight forward, or feet that are straight up and down, like an elephant's? Probably he means regular, forward-pointing feet because he does not dwell on the point. In other places he leans heavily on simile to describe some unusual feature of the beings.

The sole of the foot sounds as if it was heavily cleated. What then has he described in this verse? For a person living in a warm climate who had never seen any footwear more complicated than a sandal, he has described a highly polished leather, plastic or metal boot very well.

8. And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings.

Notice carefully that he is *not* saying that each creature had four man-like hands, one on each of four sides. He is saying that each has the normal number of hands and they are located *below* their wings. Remember that he was a careful observer and he had probably noticed that birds have wings *instead* of arms. These had both. In addition, he has given us another bit of information about the distribution of the wings. They do not appear to be arranged like a biplane, but each wing is at a ninety-degree angle from its neighboring wing like a helicopter.

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Ezekiel must have been something of a numerologist. He points out that there are four creatures, and each of the four has four faces each, and each has four wings each—but not four hands.

9. Their wings were joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward.

He is not saying that the wings of one creature are joined to the wings of another creature. He is saying that each wing is joined to another wing, not directly to the creature.

The second and third parts of this verse present a mystery. We do not know what the "theys" refer to. There are three "theys" in this verse, one after another and we are given very few clues to which refer to *creatures* and which refer to *wings*. The first "they" most likely is tied to the first part of the verse and therefore refers to the wings. Given this, there are still three interpretations:

1. *The wings* turned not when *the wings* went; *The wings* went every one straight forward.
2. *The wings* turned not when *the creatures* went; *The wings* went every one straight forward.
3. *The wings* turned not when *the creatures* went; *The creatures* went every one straight forward.

None of these three statements make much of a point, whether the creatures have helicopter wings, or bird-angel wings. Let us assume then that the first "they" refers to the creatures:

1. *The creatures* turned not when *the creatures* went; *The creatures* went every one straight forward.
2. *The creatures* turned not when *the wings* went; *The wings* went every one straight forward.
3. *The creatures* turned not when *the wings* went; *The creatures* went every one straight forward.

This last statement would pretty well describe the action of the blades of an inoperative helicopter being carried forward in a straight line. It would strike Ezekiel as odd that the wings might move and turn without turning the men under them. You might wonder why he would say ". . . wings went . . ." instead of ". . . wings turned. . . " When a light breeze moves the blades of an inoperative helicopter the blades not only turn, but they change their pitch and plane in a most random manner.

Although Ezekiel has not completed his description of the creatures, we can try now to form a picture of what he saw. No matter how we bend and squeeze, we are not going to get a Michelangelo-type angel. Look at figure one. Go back over the points that Ezekiel has described. You will see that it fits quite well.

10. As for the likeness of the faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox

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on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle.

This again does not sound very man-like. You wonder what could have kept him from pronouncing them demons. If you will study figure two, you will see what Ezekiel described. Now look at figure three. How much better could a man living six centuries before Christ describe figure three?

11. Thus were their faces: and their wings were stretched upward; Two wings of every one were joined one to another, and two covered their bodies.

See figure one again. The arrangement is like he describes. Notice that when he talks about ". . . the wings . . ." of one creature, he apparently means the whole system of wings and attachments.

12. And they went every one straight forward: wither the spirit was to go, they went; and they turned not as they went.

Again we have trouble with the "theys." Notice however, that the first part of this verse repeats the last part of verse nine. If we were right in that verse, the first "they" in this refers to the creatures again. The second part of this verse contains a new idea, "whither the spirit was to

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go . . .", has an opposite meaning from ". . . they went . . . straight forward . . ." and, ". . . they turned not when they went." The first and last part sounds like the four creatures were marching purposefully in one direction. If then the second or middle part refers to the wings, we could read it:

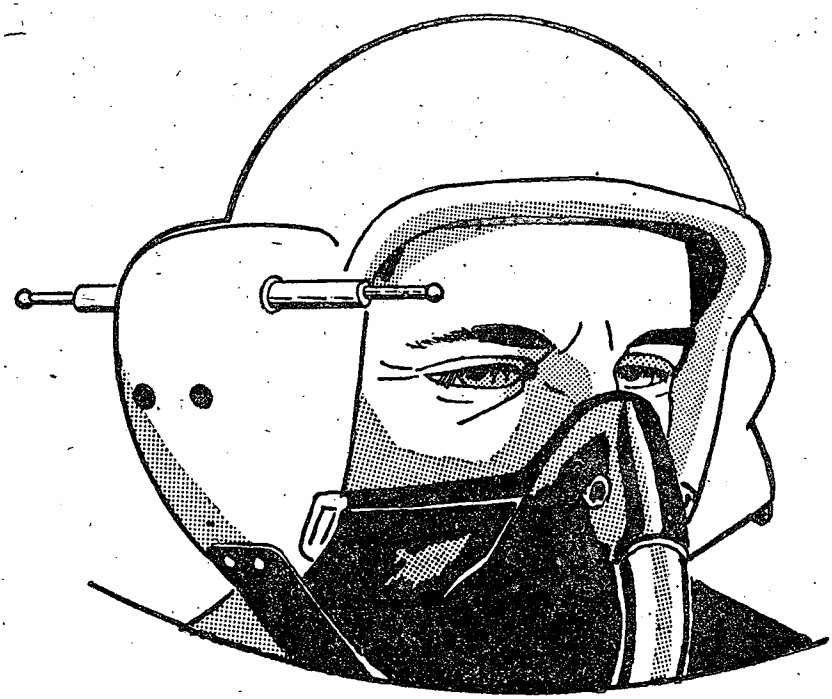
> "And *the creatures* went every one straight forward: whither the spirit was to go, *the wings* went; and *the creatures* turned not when *the wings* went."

Again we have a picture of four men walking with their inoperative helicopters moving in several different ways as the breeze and the men's motions cause them to move slightly.

Notice that Ezekiel seems to be more impressed with the wings and their motion than with any other feature of what he witnessed.

13. As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps: it went up and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning.

Here he is describing their over-all appearance. We can assume that creatures that look like men but has a surface that resembles lights, coals



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and fire must be wearing suits with a brightly colored metallic surface. The modern anodized aluminium coatings glisten and sparkle with an effect like he describes. If these are space-suits, there is a good reason for making them gaudy. If they were worn in space while working on and around a ship, they should be as bright and eye-catching as possible, in case the man became detached and floated away. He would be quite visible against the blackness of space.

14. And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning.

This might mean that they moved swiftly, but more than likely it means that they sparkled and shined on all sides, and this was visible as they moved about.

This ends the description for a while. There are two later verses of description, but we will take this when we come to it. It is surprising that Ezekiel has organized his material so well. It reads like a scientific report. If he had headed the section that we just covered, "Description," we would not have been too surprised to find the following section headed, "Action":

15. Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces.

If we have read Ezekiel correctly and the creatures did have helicopter attachments on their backs, we can assume that one of them now started his helicopter, which would appear as a "wheel" to Ezekiel, and probably surprised him greatly.

16. The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the colour of Beryl: and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel.

Here we must digress in order to put ourselves into the life and time of this man because he has mentioned the wheel. A wheel did not have quite the same meaning for him as it does for you and I, living in a mechanical age. The wheel in 600 B.C. in the area around the eastern end of the Mediterranean, the most civilized part of the world at that time, had only a few very limited uses.

One use, old even in Ezekiel's time was the potter's wheel; a simple platform mounted on crude vertical bearings so that it could be turned with one hand while the clay was worked with the other. From this the grindstone and the lapidary wheel developed for working metal and stone. These early machines probably employed some form of foot treadle but even these could not turn the wheel very fast. If the stone had a large enough diameter, it was possible to get the speed at the outer edge high enough to produce sparks when grinding hard material. The "work" took place at some distance from the axis, usually at the edge of the stone.

The wheel we usually associate

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with ancient times is the cart wheel. In its earliest form it was a solid wheel, like those still in use in primitive sections of Mexico. Even with the cart wheel, ancient man would associate the edge of the wheel with the "work" of the wheel. This was the part that left a track in the mud and dust, crushed an occasional rock and fractured an occasional toe.

In order to increase the efficiency of military chariots it was necessary to build a wheel that was lighter, yet just as strong as the solid model. This was first done by cutting out "lightening holes" between the hub and rim. Pressing this invention to the ultimate produced a spoked wheel. The Egyptians used a six-spoked chariot wheel thousands of years before Ezekiel's time, and the Greeks and others had four-spoke models. This was quite an invention and in addition to it's useful aspects, it produced some rather unusual, even magical side-effects. As every child knows, if you turn your tricycle upside-down and spin the wheel, the spokes seem to vanish. All that can be seen is the rim and the parts of the hub near the center of rotation. No matter what shape the hub actually is, it too looks round like a wheel. It is very likely that such an effect was referred to as "a wheel within a wheel."

In verse 16 Ezekiel says that, "wheels and their work was the colour of beryl . . .", a blue-green color. This sounds like the emphasis is on the color at the *edge* of the wheel. This could be from a flame coming from jets on the tips of the rotors.

All of the creatures must have started their rotors. (". . . they four had one likeness.") They looked like ". . . a wheel in the middle of a wheel." Or the spinning spokes of a wheel. Notice also that he never mentions "wings" and "wheels" at the same time, for when one appears the other vanishes.

17. When they went, they went upon their four sides: and they turned not when they went.

If four men were standing fairly close together on the ground with running helicopters, they would tend to spread out as they left the ground, so as to not run into each other. Moreover, with a helicopter, it is not necessary to *face* the direction you intend to go. This sounds like four men lifting off the ground, spreading out slightly and starting up and away, in formation.

18. As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rings were full of eyes round about them four.

The four creatures are now high in the air above Ezekiel, a dreadful and awe-inspiring sight for a man of Ezekiel's time. Their "rings" obviously are the flames from their tip-jets, seen from below—the only part of the wheel now visible from far below. And the rings *would* be full of eyes. When a jet or rocket motor is operating there is a shock wave generated in the tailpipe which tends to cut the exhaust gas into segments.

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Time exposures of jet aircraft at night often show this. When a tip-jet is operating, these bright, evenly spaced spots give it the appearance of a string of pearls, ". . . full of eyes round about them . . ."

19. And when the living creatures went, the wheels went up by them: and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up.

Ezekiel makes it clear that he does not know whether the men are lifting the wheels or the wheels lifting the men, but both went up together.

20. Withersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither was their spirit to go; and the wheels were lifted over against them: for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels.

This is a most sophisticated opinion. Although Ezekiel was describing only what he saw, he could not help but have some opinions about the creatures. In verse nineteen he makes it clear that he does not know whether man is lifting the machine, or the other way around, but here he makes it clear that whichever, there is no doubt that the creatures are *controlling*. They are not being carried off by the will of the wheel.

21. When those went, these went; and when those stood, these stood; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels.

This carries the idea of control one step farther. Not only are the men controlling the wheels, but they are self-controlled: They are flying in formation.

22. And the likeness of the firmament upon the heads of the living creatures was as the colour of terrible crystal, stretched forth over their heads above.

Perhaps this verse was moved out of it's original position, for it returns to the description of the creatures. You may have noticed that many of the verses are written so that it is in part, an enlargement of the thought put forward in the preceding verse, and part new thought, to be enlarged upon in the following verse. Verses twenty-two and twenty-three *seem* to go together. Both would fit the rest of the chapter better if they were between verses twelve and thirteen.

What is meant by "firmament"? These people had no term for a hollow-sphere. Most spherical objects were not hollow. They had no soap, so they had no soap bubbles. The most common thing to compare a hollow sphere to was the sky, the bowl of the heavens—the firmament. This crystal-clear bubble was over the heads of the creatures, one on each creature.

We will come to the word firmament again, but notice that this is, ". . . the *likeness* of the firmament . . . ", not the firmament itself. Later verses speak only of the "firmament".

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23. And under the firmament were their wings straight, the one toward the other: every one had two, which covered on this side, and every one had two which covered on that side, their bodies.

If you changed ". . . under the firmament . . ." to, ". . . below the sky" you would get a clearer picture. If you look at the picture of a house, the roof is, "below the sky," if you start at the top and work down. If you start at the ground and work up, the roof is, "at the top" of the house. Ezekiel's description of the wings, which is continued in this verse, concerns the wings "at the top." They are (connected), ". . . one toward the other, about like in figure one.

24. And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of great waters, like the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as the noise of the host: when they stood they let down their wings.

If you have ever stood near a running tip-jet, or any jet engine, I think you will know what Ezekiel means. The last statement is most interesting. It seems that when the creatures landed again they detached the helicopter mechanisms and set them down, as anyone will with a heavy back-pack who is resting or waiting.

25. And there was a voice from the firmament that was over their heads, when they stood, and had let down their wings.

This voice, or sound, was not from the *likeness* of the firmament, but from the sky, as they stood there with their wings off.

This is the end of Ezekiel's attention to the four creatures.

26. And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone; and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it.

Out of the sky comes a man on a green seat. But a throne is more than a chair. It is usually associated with a platform. This may be some kind of flying platform similar to those being tested for the transporting of infantry.

27. And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about.

Since this thing was high over their heads, and he saw fire round about it, the fire may have been on the under side. What he says about the man is very like what he said about the other four, except that he describes the man from the waist, up and down, as if he could not see the area near the man's waist.

28. As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the

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brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one who spake.

What prismatic effect, brighter than the outdoor desert sunshine is hard to imagine, but a large shining object close at hand would be pretty terrifying. It seems strange that Ezekiel would not throw himself upon the ground, after withstanding all he had seen up till now, but we must remember that a man seated on a throne, a flying throne at that might have a lot more meaning for him than it would for you and me. If this object happened to come down closer to him than the other creatures had, he might well have broken.

We have now covered every verse of the first chapter quite thoroughly. Since the Book of Ezekiel contains forty-eight chapters, we might fear that this is just the beginning of a long and tiring study. Fortunately or unfortunately this is not the case. The second chapter begins:

804.
And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak to thee.
2. And the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me.
3. And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me, even unto this very day.

This typically prophetic writing goes on for many pages, telling the woes and sins of the Israelites. Reference is made in a few places to the material in the first chapter, but even this dies out before the end of the book.

No mention is made again of the living creatures till chapter three where the following verse is found:

13. I heard also the noise of the wings of the living creatures that touched one another, and the noise of the wheels over against them, and a noise of great rushing.

This combines some of the ideas of earlier verses without adding any new information. Notice that writer has the notion that the wings of one creature touched those of another, or that the creatures touched one another.

This verse is typical of several more scattered throughout the first third of the book. All the verses mentioning the living creatures after the first chapter are more dramatic and all fail to continue the style of a careful reporter. No new ideas are advanced, but some rather unusual contradictions are introduced, by using several parts of several verses of Chapter One. Chapter Ten reads like an attempt at rephrasing Chapter One and Chapter Eleven is the last mention of the living creatures in the entire book.

Although it contains no further information on the living creatures,

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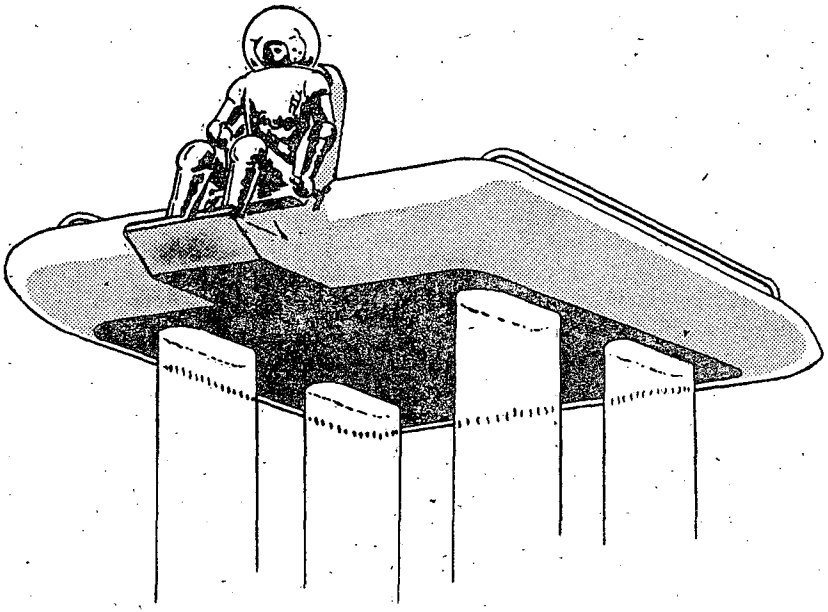

Chapter Three has a verse that should be mentioned. Verse fifteen sounds like a fitting conclusion to the first chapter:

15. Then I came to them of the captivity at Tel-Abib, that dwelt by the river Chebar, and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them for seven days.

Just what do we have? We have a description of four spacesuited and helicopter-equipped men, getting off of, or out of something that landed in a cloud of dust or smoke. The four men start their helicopters, take off and fly to some height. On returning to the ground they remove their flying gear and wait. They are met by a fifth man, riding on a flying platform. Such an event would cause some interest in any community today, but in those times it could only be interpreted as supernatural—a miracle. The miracle may well be that the story has been preserved for us, twenty-six centuries later.

A word for word interpretation is only part of the oddity of this chapter. Several other aspects are worth pondering. The whole chapter has a well-worn feeling, as though the author had told and re-told it many times. It reads like a deposition, taken down by a police officer, after the witness, who prides himself on truthfulness, has told the story over and over to his incredulous friends. It has a certain poetic beauty. It has the style of one who is telling you the truth, no matter whether you

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are going to believe it or not. It is the presentation of a tableau that makes no sense to the man who witnessed it, or to those to whom he is describing it.

The product of a man's imagination is tied to his own experience, his own time. A wonderful tale of the supernatural may sound very imaginative to the contemporary of the teller, but it will date itself to a later generation. The lives of the Greek gods are related to the lives of the early Greeks. An imaginative science-fiction writer such as Jules Verne is limited in the same way. As good as he was, experience has set an outer limit to his imagination. Ezekiel's tale is not in this class. To his contemporaries, it was out of step with reality. To us it is real enough, but out of step with time. The most credible explanation is that it really happened.

Perhaps there are some points of my interpretation that you do not agree with, but as a whole the story does hang together rather well. If you have the feeling that it would be easy to fit the words around an entirely different set of circumstances, I suggest that you try.

It is interesting to know that some years ago a verbal battle raged in theological circles as to whether Ezekiel wrote the Book of Ezekiel. One school of thought held that he did, while the other school held that the first chapter was a "forgery," written in the third century before Christ, and tacked on as a sort of "leader" to Ezekiel's book. For our purposes it cannot be a forgery. It makes little difference how long ago it was written, so long as it was not since World War II!

Suppose Ezekiel or some ancient man actually saw what I have proposed. What are the possible explanations? Is it possible that some ancient race, unknown to us, could have developed such equipment? It is not likely. During the last one hundred years we have been prodding about in the earth and finding so many ancient records that someone else besides Ezekiel would certainly have left us a report on them.

The things that were science fiction twenty years ago are solid fact now. We know that a landing on the Moon is only a question of time, a few years at the most. The planets of our Solar System will follow, at least some before the turn of the century, probably. As for the planets of neighboring stars we cannot say. We have no way of exploring them at present, but that is not the same as saying that we never will. If the past performance of the human race is any measure, they will likely fall to exploration within two hundred years.

If you concede that it is possible that we can visit other star systems in a future not too distant, why then could we not have been visited some time in the past? It may tend to deflate our ego to think that there may be intelligent beings not too different from us who are advanced beyond us. It need not. One of the most striking features of Ezekiel's story, if

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it has been decoded correctly, is that these beings are very much like we are, right at the present time. That puts them three or four thousand years ahead of us, a very small amount indeed when we consider the long sweep of human life and development before the dawn of written history.

We are so used to stories of "Bug-eyed Monsters" coming to Earth, that the idea of beings from other worlds looking and acting human seems fantastic. It should not. There is good sound scientific reason to believe that there is little chance of it being any other way. Life is a delicate and fragile thing when compared to cosmic extremes of temperature and environment in our universe. If life formed on earth as science now believes that it did, we must have had just the right size planet at just the right distance from a particular type of star. While such extremely narrow limits are going to reduce the number of places in the universe where life can develop, it is also going to limit the *differences.* In our creation things operate by rule. The rule is that in similar circumstance there are similar solutions to a problem. Man is the solution of the problem of building the highest form of life on Earth. On a similar planet we can expect to find a similar solution. This is simply the extension of the theory of *parallel evolution* to a cosmic scale.

If then, we were visited by people from another world, what were they doing here? Strangely enough, there is considerable evidence of what they were up to from Ezekiel's own testimony. Let us suppose that these creatures were very much like we expect to be in five hundred years. They have come from some other star system in a ship whose principle of operation is as yet unknown to us. We can assume that it was a rather large ship, being that there were five beings on board at once, and we can presume that enough of a crew remained aboard to return it home in case something happened to the explorers. How would we proceed in such a case?

It is not likely that such a large ship would be brought down to the surface of the earth. After arriving in the neighborhood of the earth, it would be put into orbit, and the surface of the earth would be studied through telescopes for days or weeks. The entire radio spectrum would be scanned to determine if there were inhabitants below, capable of operating electrical equipment. A small—manned or unmanned—flyer would be sent down into the upper atmosphere to determine the level of radioactivity, air components, spore and bacteria count and radio signals incapable of penetrating the atmosphere. From the ship the land areas would be mapped and studied. Any large object on the ground that appeared to be of an artificial nature would be given particular attention. During the night-time hours below, these objects and areas would be very carefully observed for signs of light.

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In the case of our visitors of twenty-six centuries ago, this is what they would have found: Quite a few artificial works could be seen. Cultivated fields and large buildings would be easily visible in many places around the eastern end of the Mediterranean. The Pyramids were old even then. (The Great Wall in China probably had not been started.) There would be no radio sounds, except for an occasional lightning click. We do not know how well their cities were lighted at night, but they were probably too dim to see. Tiny orange pinpoints of light from outdoor bonfires could probably be seen around the globe, but there would be more of them around the Mediterranean and in the East and Near East than anywhere else. The radioactivity level would be low. Our visitors would conclude that the inhabitants were either in the early stages of civilization, or were once highly civilized and now sunk back to a primitive stage. They would know that this was due to something other than atomic war.

We have to conclude that these were moral beings. If the conditions below were as they seemed to be, that of an early civilization, they would not want to interfere. They would want to observe without being observed, so even if it were technically possible they would not want to bring a large ship down. They would send down as small and inconspicuous a vehicle as possible.

We usually picture such a craft as a small version of the larger ship, or a large—by our standards—rocket, or an aircraft similar to our Dyna-soar. For people this advanced technologically something a lot simpler might be used. It might be an open vehicle, similar to our flying platforms, but with vastly more powerful nuclear power plants. The men going down would have to wear air-tight suits—spacesuits, and would have to leave them on all the time they were below, for fear of becoming infected with molds and viruses that the natives would long since have become immune to. One man, the pilot, would stay with the platform while the others did the observing and recording.

The flying platform would have no need for rapid forward motion, at least inside the atmosphere and therefore would have little need for streamlining or protective covering for the passengers, who would carry their equipment with them. Most of the equipment for the survey would be built into the suits. They would each carry a set of portable helicopter attachments so they could cover more ground in a hurry. Like small helicopters of our time, these probably would have a rather limited speed and range, but they would be extremely maneuverable.

The platform on the other hand, being nuclear powered, would probably be very powerful and have almost unlimited range, but it would be less maneuverable. The products of its exhaust might be radioactive and therefore its operators would be reluctant to operate it above or near

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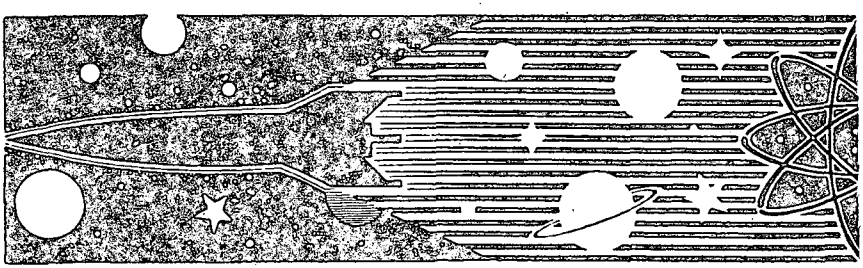
the natives of the planet, or places that they frequented.

As they push away from the mother-ship the spacemen would be in free-fall and would tend to "float" nearby until they turned the bottom side of the platform toward the direction of their orbit and applied power. They would then drop toward the surface, but with almost unlimited power available they could keep the downward component of their fall within limits and prevent overheating. They could probably be on the surface in less than an hour.

The first and most likely area of exploration would be Egypt. The platform could be landed a few miles back from the Nile and be in completely unoccupied desert. The four helicopter-equipped explorers could put on their rotating-wing backpacks and by keeping low, come up very close to some center of civilization without being seen. By going up to a few thousand feet they could observe a fairly large area. Even if they were spotted, they would be small and unrecognizable, and cause a minimum amount of excitement.

Like any tourist in any age they would probably be most interested in the territory around the pyramids. When they had finished here they might want to look over the country around what is now Bagdad, but *then* only near the capital city of Nebuchadnezzar's empire. This is about eight hundred miles away, an impractical trip by helicopter, so they would return to the platform, climb to a few hundred thousand feet, and scoot over in a few minutes. Here they would land again in some uninhabited spot and repeat the maneuver. This country was probably sprinkled with more people than they expected. Maybe that's why this is the legendary flying carpet country, or maybe not. At any rate, one lonely military prisoner, working by himself near the banks of a stream must have seen them. Even if they did notice him, what possible harm could he do? In the present state of the civilization who would remember what he said or even believe him? I do.

THE END



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HIDING...

By POUL ANDERSON

Illustrated by Schoenherr

CAPTAIN Bahadur Torrance received the news as befitted a Lodgemaster in the Federated Brotherhood of Spacemen. He heard it out, interrupting only with a few knowledgeable questions. At the end, he said calmly, "Well done, Freeman Yamamura. Please keep this to yourself till further notice. I'll think about what's to be done. Carry on." But when the engineer officer had left the cabin—the news had not been the sort you tell on the intercom—he poured himself a triple whisky, sat down, and stared emptily at the viewscreen.

He had traveled far, seen much, and been well rewarded. However, promotion being swift in his difficult line of work, he was still too young not to feel cold at hearing his death sentence.

The screen showed such a multitude of stars, hard and winter-brilliant, that only an astronaut could recognize individuals. Torrance sought past the Milky Way until he identified Polaris. Then Valhalla would lie so-and-so many degrees away, in *that* direction. Not that he could see a gee-type sun at this distance, without optical instruments more powerful than any aboard the *Hebe G.B.* But he found a certain comfort in knowing his eyes were sighted toward the nearest League base—houses, ships, humans, nestled in a green valley on Freya—in this almost uncharted section of our galactic arm. Especially when he expected never to land there again.

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....PLACE

You'd think it'd be a little difficult for the owners and builders of a spaceship to hide themselves on board their own ship, so aliens couldn't tell the spacemen from the zoo!

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The ship hummed around him, pulsing in and out of four-space with a quasi-speed that left light far behind and yet was too slow to save him.

Well . . . it became the captain to think first of the others. Torrance sighed and stood up. He spent a moment checking his appearance; morale was important, never more so than now. Rather than the usual gray coverall of shipboard, he preferred full uniform: blue tunic, white cape and culottes, gold braid. As a citizen of Ramanujan planet, he kept a turban on his dark aquiline head, pinned with the Ship-and-Sunburst of the Polesotechnic League.

He went down a passageway to the owner's suite. The steward was just leaving, a tray in his hand. Torrance signaled the door to remain open, clicked his heels and bowed. "I pray pardon for the interruption, sir," he said. "May I speak privately with you? Urgent."

Nicholas van Rijn hoisted the two-liter tankard which had been brought him. His several chins quivered under the stiff goatee; the noise of his gulping filled the room, from the desk littered with papers to the Huy Brasealian jewel-tapestry hung on the opposite bulkhead. Something by Mozart lilted out of a taper. Blond, big-eyed, and thoroughly three-dimensional, Jeri Kofoed curled on a couch, within easy reach of him where he sprawled in his lounger. Torrance, who was married but had been away from home for some time, forced his gaze back to the merchant.

"Ahhh!" Van Rijn banged the empty mug down on a table and wiped foam from his mustaches. "Pox and pestilence, but the first beer of the day is good! Something with it is so quite cool and, um, by damn, what word do I want?" He thumped his sloping forehead with one hairy fist. "I get more absent in the mind every week. Ah, Torrance, when you are too a poor old lonely fat man with all powers failing him, you will look back and remember me and wish you was more good to me. But then is too late." He sighed like a minor tornado and scratched the pelt on his chest. In the near tropic temperature at which he insisted on maintaining his quarters, he need only wrap a sarong about his huge body. "Well, what begobbled stupiding is it I must be dragged from my all too much work to fix up for you, ha?"

His tone was genial. He had, in fact, been in a good mood ever since they escaped the Adderkops. (Who wouldn't be? For a mere space yacht, even an armed one with ultrapowered engines, to get away from three cruisers, was more than an accomplishment; it was very nearly a miracle. Van Rijn still kept four grateful candles burning before his Martian sandroot statuette of St. Dismas.) True, he sometimes threw crockery at the steward when a drink arrived later than he wished, and he fired everybody aboard ship at least once a day. But that was normal.

Jeri Kofoed arched her brows.

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"Your first beer, Nicky?" she murmured. "Now really! Two hours ago—"

"*Ja,* but that was before midnight time. If not Greenwich midnight, then surely on some planet somewhere, *nie?* So is a new day." Van Rijn took his churchwarden off the table and began stuffing it. "Well, sit down, Captain Torrance, make yourself to be comfortable and lend me your lighter. You look like a dynamited custard, boy. All you youngsters got no stamina. When I was a working spaceman, by Judas, we made solve all our own problems. These days, death and damnation, you come ask me how to wipe your noses! Nobody has any guts but me." He slapped his barrel belly. "So what is be-jingle-bang gone wrong now?"

Torrance wet his lips. "I'd rather speak to you alone, sir."

He saw the color leave Jeri's face. She was no coward. Frontier planets, even the pleasant ones like Freya, didn't breed that sort. She had come along on what she knew would be a hazardous trip because a chance like this—to get an in with the merchant prince of the Solar Spice & Liquors Company, which was one of the major forces within the whole Polesotechnic League—was too good for an opportunistic girl to refuse. She had kept her nerve during the fight and the subsequent escape, though death came very close. But they were still far from her planet, among unknown stars, with the enemy hunting them.

"So go in the bedroom," Van Rijn ordered her.

"Please," she whispered. "I'd be happier hearing the truth."

The small black eyes, set close to Van Rijn's hook nose, flared. "Foulness and fulminate!" he bellowed. "What is this poppies with cocking? When I say frog, by billy damn, you jump."

She sprang to her feet, mutinous. Without rising, he slapped her on the appropriate spot. It sounded like a pistol going off. She gasped, choked back an indignant screech, and stamped into the inner suite. Van Rijn rang for the steward.

"More beer this calls for," he said to Torrance. "Well, don't stand there making bug's eyes! I got no time for fumblydiddles, even if you overpaid loafer do. I got to make revises of all price schedules on pepper and nutmeg for Freya before we get there. Satan and stenches! At least ten per cent more that idiot of a factor could charge them, and not reduce volume of sales. I swear it! All good saints, hear me and help a poor old man saddled with oatmeal-brained squatpots for workers!"

Torrance curbed his temper with an effort. "Very well, sir. I just had a report from Yamamura. You know we took a near miss during the fight, which hulled us at the engine room. The converter didn't seem damaged, but after patching the hole, the gang's been checking to make sure.

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And it turns out that about half the circuitry for the infra-shield generator was fused. We can't replace more than a fraction of it. If we continue to run at full quasi-speed, we'll burn out the whole converter in another fifty hours."

"Ah, s-s-so." Van Rijn grew murmurous. The snap of the lighter, as he touched it to his pipe, came startlingly loud. "No chance of stopping altogether to make fixings? Once out of hyperdrive, we would be much too small a thing for the bestinkered Adderkops to find. Hey?"

"No, sir. I said we haven't enough replacement parts. This is a yacht, not a warship."

"Hokay, we must continue in hyperdrive. How slow must we go, to make sure we come within calling distance of Freya before our engine burns out?"

"One tenth of top speed. It'd take us six months."

"No, my captain friend, not so long. We never reach Valhalla star at all. The Adderkops find us first."

"I suppose so. We haven't got six months' stores aboard anyway." Torrance stared at the deck. "What occurs to me is, well, we could reach one of the nearby stars. There just barely might be a planet with an industrial civilization, whose people could eventually be taught to make the circuits we need. A habitable planet, at least . . . maybe—"

"Nie!" Van Rijn shook his head till the greasy black ringlets swirled about his shoulders. "All us men and one woman, for life on some garbagey rock where they have not even wine grapes? I'll take an Adderkop shell and go out like a gentleman, by damn!" The steward appeared. "Where you been snoozing? Beer, with God's curses on you! I need to make thinks! How you expect I can think with a mouth like a desert in midsummer?"

Torrance chose his words carefully. Van Rijn would have to be reminded that the captain, in space, was the final boss. And yet the old devil must not be antagonized, for he had a record of squirming between the horns of dilemmas. "I'm open to suggestions, sir, but I can't take the responsibility of courting enemy attack."

Van Rijn rose and lumbered about the cabin, fuming obscenities and volcanic blue clouds. As he passed the shelf where St. Dismas stood, he pinched the candles out in a marked manner. That seemed to trigger something in him. He turned about and said, "Ha! Industrial civilizations, *ja,* maybe so. Not only the pest-begotten Adderkops ply this region of space. Gives some chance perhaps we can come in detection range of an un-beat-up ship, *nie?* You go get Yamamura to jack up our detector sensitivities till we can feel a gnat twiddle its wings back in my Djakarta office on Earth, so lazy the cleaners are. Then go off this direct course and run a standard naval search pattern at reduced speed."

"And if we find a ship? Could belong to the enemy, you know."

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"That chance we take."

"In all events, sir, we'll lose time. The pursuit will gain on us while we follow a search-helix. Especially if we spend days persuading some nonhuman crew who've never heard of the human race, that we have to be taken to Valhalla immediately if not sooner."

"We burn that bridge when we come to it. You have might be a more hopeful scheme?"

"Well—" Torrance pondered a while, blackly.

The steward came in with a fresh tankard. Van Rijn snatched it.

"I think you're right, sir," said Torrance. "I'll go and—"

"Virginal!" bellowed Van Rijn.

Torrance jumped. "What?"

"Virginal! That's the word I was looking for. The first beer of the day, you idiot!"

The cabin door chimed. Torrance groaned. He'd been hoping for some sleep, at least, after more hours on deck than he cared to number. But when the ship prowled through darkness, seeking another ship which might or might not be out there, and the hunters drew closer—"Come in."

Jeri Kofoed entered. Torrance gaped, sprang to his feet, and bowed. "Freelady! What, what, what a surprise! Is there anything I can do?"

"Please." She laid a hand on his. Her gown was of shimmerite and shameless cut, but the look she gave Torrance had nothing to do with that. "I had to come, Lodgemaster. If you've any pity, you'll listen to me."

He waved her to a chair, offered cigarettes, and struck one for himself. The smoke, drawn deep into his lungs, calmed him a little. He sat down on the opposite side of the table. "If I can be of help to you, Freelady Kofoed, you know I'm happy to oblige. Uh . . . Freeman van Rijn—"

"He's asleep. Not that he has any claims on me. I haven't signed a contract or any such thing." Her irritation gave way to a wry smile. "Oh, admitted, we're all his inferiors, in fact as well as in status. I'm not contravening his wishes, not really. It's just that he won't answer my questions, and if I don't find out what's going on I'll have to start screaming."

Torrance weighed a number of factors. A private explanation, in more detail than the crew had required, might indeed be best for her. "As you wish, Freelady," he said, and related what had happened to the converter. "We can't fix it ourselves," he concluded. "If we continued traveling at high quasi-speed, we'd burn it out before we arrived; and then, without power, we'd soon die. If we proceed slowly enough to preserve it, we'd need half a year to reach Valhalla, which is more time than we have supplies for. Though the Adderkops would doubtless track us down within a week or two."

She shivered. "Why? I don't understand." She stared at her glowing cigarette end for a moment, until a degree of composure returned, and with a touch of humor. "I may pass

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for a fast, sophisticated girl on Freya; captain. But you know even better than I, Freya is a jerkwater planet on the very fringe of human civilization. We've hardly any spatial traffic, except the League merchant ships, and they never stay long in port. I really know nothing about military or political technology. No one told me this was anything more important than a scouting mission, because I never thought to inquire. Why should the Adderkops be so anxious to catch us?"

Torrance considered the total picture before framing a reply. As a spaceman of the League, he must appreciate how little the enemy actually meant to colonists who seldom left their home world. The name "Adderkop" was Freyan, a term of scorn for outlaws who'd been booted off the planet a century ago. Since then, however, the Freyans had had no direct contact with them. Somewhere in the unexplored deeps beyond Valhalla, the fugitives had settled on some unknown planet. Over the generations, their numbers grew, and so did the numbers of their warships. But Freya was still too strong for them to raid, and had no extraplanetary enterprises of her own to be harried. Why should Freya care?

Torrance decided to explain systematically, even if he must repeat the obvious. "Well," he said, "the Adderkops aren't stupid. They keep somewhat in touch with events, and know the Polesotechnic League wants to expand its operations into this region. They don't like that. It'd mean the end of their attacks on planets which can't fight back, their squeezing of tribute and their overpriced trade. Not that the League is composed of saints; we don't tolerate that sort of thing, but merely because freebooting cuts into the profits of our member companies. So the Adderkops undertook, not to fight a full-dress war against us, but to harass our outposts till we gave it up as a bad job. They have the advantage of knowing their own sector of space, which we hardly do at all. And we were, indeed, at the point of writing this whole region off and trying some place else. Freeman van Rijn wanted to make one last attempt. The opposition to doing so was so great that he had to come here and lead the expedition himself.

"I suppose you know what he did. Used an unholy skill at bribery and bluff, at extracting what little information the prisoners we'd taken possessed, at fitting odd facts together. He got a clue to a hitherto untried segment. We flitted there, picked up a neutrino trail, and followed it to a human-colonized planet. As you know, it's almost certainly their own home world.

"If we bring back that information, there'll be no more trouble with the Adderkops. Not after the League sends in a few Star class battleships and threatens to bombard their planet. They realize as much. We were spotted; several warcraft jumped us; we were lucky enough to get away. Their ships are obsolete, and so far

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we've shown them a clean pair of heels. But I hardly think they've quit hunting for us. They'll send their entire fleet cruising in search. Hyperdrive vibrations transmit instantaneously, and can be detected up to about one light-year distance. So if any Adderkop picks up our 'wake' and homes in on it—with us crippled—that's the end."

She drew hard on her cigarette. "What are your plans?"

"A counter-move. Instead of trying to make Freya . . . uh . . . I mean, we're proceeding in a search-helix at medium speed, straining our own detectors. If we discover another ship, we'll use the last gasp of our engine to close in. If it's an Adderkop vessel, well, perhaps we can seize it or something; we do have a couple of light guns in our turrets. It may be a nonhuman craft, though. Our Intelligence reports, interrogation of prisoners, evaluation of explorers' observations, and so on, all indicate that three or four different species in this region possess the hyperdrive. The Adderkops themselves aren't certain about all of them. Space is so damned *huge*."

"If it does turn out to be nonhuman?"

"Then we'll do what seems indicated."

"I see." Her bright head nodded. She sat for a while, unspeaking, before she dazzled him with a smile. "Thanks, captain. You don't know how much you've helped me."

Torrance suppressed a foolish grin. "A pleasure, Freelady."

"I'm coming to Earth with you. Did you know that? Freeman van Rijn has promised me a very good job."

He always does, thought Torrance.

Jeri leaned closer. "I hope we'll have a chance on the Earthward trip to get better acquainted, captain. Or even right now."

The alarm bell chose that moment to ring.

The *Hebe G.B.* was a yacht, not a buccaneer frigate. When Nicholas van Rijn was aboard, though, the distinction sometimes got a little blurred. So she had more legs than most ships, detectors of uncommon sensitivity, and a crew experienced in the tactics of overhauling.

She was able to get a bearing on the hyper-emission of the other ship long before her own vibrations were observed. Pacing the unseen one, she established the set course it was following, then poured on all available juice to intercept. If the other had maintained quasivelocity, there would have been contact in three or four hours. Instead, its wake indicated a sheering off, an attempt to flee. The *Hebe G.B.* changed course too and continued gaining on her slower quarry.

"They're afraid of us," decided Torrance. "And they're not running back toward the Adderkop sun. Which two facts indicate they're not Adderkops themselves, but do have reason to be scared of strangers." He nodded, rather grimly, for during the

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preliminary investigations he had inspected a few backward planets which the bandit nation had visited.

Seeing that the pursuer kept shortening her distance, the pursued turned off their hyperdrive. Reverting to intrinsic sublight velocity, converter throttled down to minimal output, their ship became an infinitesimal speck in an effectively infinite space. The maneuver often works; after casting about futilely for a while, the enemy gives up and goes home. The *Hebe G.B.*, though, was prepared. The known superlight vector, together with the instant of cutoff, gave her computers a rough idea of where the prey was. She continued to that volume of space and then hopped about in a well-designed search pattern, reverting to normal state at intervals to sample the neutrino haze which any nuclear engine emits. Those nuclear engines known as stars provided most; but by statistical analysis, the computers presently isolated one feeble nearby source. The yacht went thither—and wan against the glittering sky, the other ship appeared in her screens.

It was several times her size, a cylinder with bluntly rounded nose and massive drive cones, numerous housings for auxiliary boats, a single gun turret. The principles of physics dictate that the general conformation of all ships intended for a given purpose shall be roughly the same. But any spaceman could see that this one had never been built by members of Technic civilization.

Fire blazed. Even with the automatic stopping-down of his viewscreen, Torrance was momentarily blinded. Instruments told him that the stranger had fired a fusion shell which his own robogunners had intercepted with a missile. The attack had been miserably slow and feeble. This was not a warcraft in any sense; it was no more a match for the *Hebe G.B.* than the yacht was for one of the Adderkops chasing her.

"Hokay, now we got that foolishness out of the way and we can talk business," said Van Rijn. "Get them on the telecom and develop a common language. Fast! Then explain we mean no harm but want just a lift to Valhalla." He hesitated before adding, with a distinct wince, "We can pay well."

"Might prove difficult, sir," said Torrance. "Our ship is identifiably human-built, but chances are that the only humans they've ever met are Adderkops."

"Well, so if it makes needful, we can board them and force them to transport us, *nie?* Hurry up, for Satan's sake! If we wait too long here, like behobbled snoozers, we'll get caught."

Torrance was about to point out they were safe enough. The Adderkops were far behind the swifter Terrestrial ship. They could have no idea that her hyperdrive was now cut off; when they began to suspect it, they could have no measurable probability of finding her. Then he remembered that the case was not so simple. If the parleying with these strangers took unduly long—more than a

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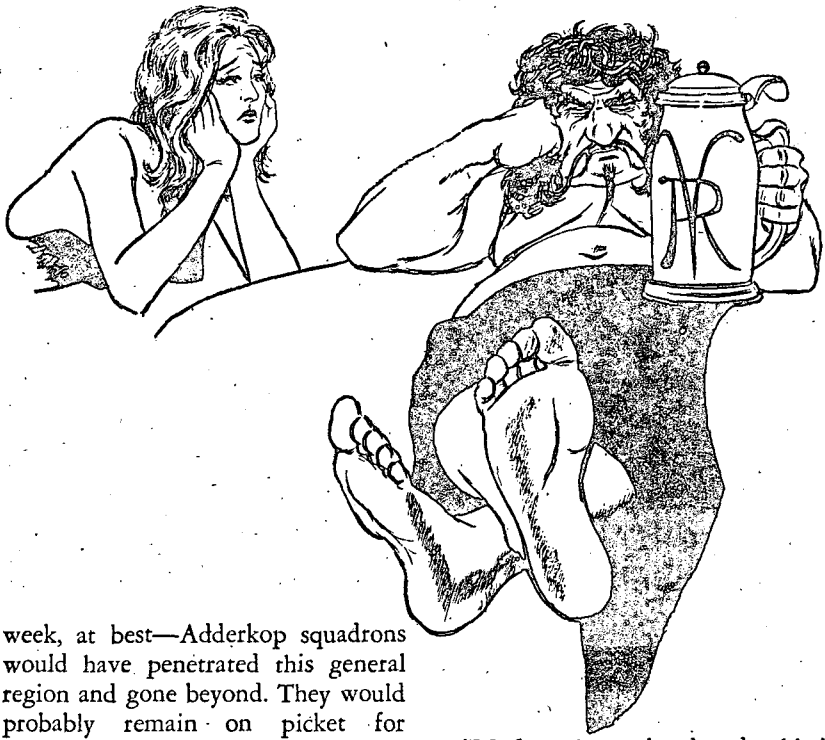

week, at best—Adderkop squadrons would have penetrated this general region and gone beyond. They would probably remain on picket for months: which the humans could not do, for lack of food. When a hyper-drive did start up, they'd detect it, and run down this awkward merchantman with ease. The only hope was to hitch a ride to Valhalla *soon,* using the head start already gained to offset the disadvantage of reduced speed.

"We're trying all bands, sir," he said. "No response so far." He frowned worriedly. "I don't understand. They must know we've got them cold, and they must have picked up our calls and realize we want to talk. Why don't they respond? Wouldn't cost them anything."

"Maybe they abandoned ship," suggested the communications officer. "They might have hyper-drive lifeboats."

"No." Torrance shook his head. "We'd have spotted that—Keep trying, Freeman Betancourt. If we haven't gotten an answer in an hour, we'll lay alongside and board."

The receiver screens remained blank. But at the end of the grace period, when Torrance was issuing space armor, Yamamura reported something new. Neutrino output had increased from a source near the stern of the alien. Some process involving moderate amounts of energy was being carried out.

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Torrance clamped down his helmet. "We'll have a look at that."

He posted a skeleton crew—Van Rijn himself, loudly protesting, took over the bridge—and led his boarding party to the main air lock. Smooth as a gliding shark—the old swine was a blue-ribbon spaceman after all, the captain realized in some astonishment—the *Hebe G.B.* clamped on a tractor beam and hauled herself toward the bigger vessel.

It disappeared. Recoil sent the yacht staggering.

"Beelzebub and botulism!" snarled van Rijn. "He went back into hyper, ha? We see about that!" The ulcerated converter shrieked as he called upon it; but the engines were given power. On a lung and a half, the Terrestrial ship again overtook the foreigner. Van Rijn phased in so casually that Torrance almost forgot this was a job considered difficult by master pilots. He evaded a frantic pressor beam and tied his yacht to the larger hull with unshearable bands of force. He cut off his hyperdrive again, for the converter couldn't take much more. Being within the force field of the alien, the *Hebe G.B.* was carried along, though the "drag" of extra mass reduced quasi-speed considerably. If he had hoped the grappled vessel would quit and revert to normal state, he was disappointed. The linked hulls continued plunging faster than light, toward an unnamed constellation.

Torrance bit back an oath, summoned his men, and went outside.

He had never forced entry on a hostile craft before, but assumed it wasn't much different from burning his way into a derelict. Having chosen his spot, he set up a balloon tent to conserve air; no use killing the alien crew. The torches of his men spewed flame, blue actinic sparks fountained backward and danced through zero gravity. Meanwhile the rest of the squad stood by with blasters and grenades.

Beyond, the curves of the two hulls dropped off to infinity. Without compensating electronic viewscreens, the sky was weirdly distorted by aberration and Doppler effect, as if the men were already dead and beating through the other existence toward Judgment. Torrance held his mind firmly to practical worries. Once inboard, the nonhumans made prisoner, how was he to communicate? Especially if he first had to gun down several of them—

The outer shell was peeled back. He studied the inner structure of the plate with fascination. He'd never seen anything like it before. Surely this race had developed space travel quite independently of mankind. Though their engineering must obey the same natural laws, it was radically different in detail. What was that tough but corky substance lining the inner shell? And was the circuitry embedded in it, for he didn't see any elsewhere?

The last defense gave way. Torrance swallowed hard and shot a flashbeam into the interior. Darkness

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and vacuum met him. When he entered the hull, he floated weightless; artificial gravity had been turned off. The crew was hiding some place and —

And—

Torrance returned to the yacht in an hour. When he came on the bridge, he found Van Rijn seated by Jeri. The girl started to speak, took a closer look at the captain's face, and clamped her teeth together.

"Well?" snapped the merchant peevishly.

Torrance cleared his throat. His voice sounded unfamiliar and far-away to him. "I think you'd better come have a look, sir."

"You found the crew, wherever the sputtering hell they holed up? What are they like? What kind of ship is this we've gotten us, ha?"

Torrance chose to answer the last question first. "It seems to be an interstellar animal collector's transport vessel. The main hold is full of cages —environmentally controlled compartments, I should say—with the damnedest assortment of creatures I've ever seen outside Luna City Zoo."

"So what is that to me? Where is the collector himself, and his fig-plucking friends?"

"Well, sir," Torrance gulped. "We're pretty sure by now, they're hiding from us. Among all the other animals."

A tube was run between the yacht's main lock and the entry cut in the other ship. Through this, air was pumped and electric lines were strung, to illuminate the prize. By some fancy juggling with the gravitic generator of the *Hebe G.B.*, Yamamura supplied about one-fourth Earth-weight to the foreigner, though he couldn't get the direction uniform and its decks felt canted in wildly varying degrees.

Even under such conditions, Van Rijn walked ponderously. He stood with a salami in one hand and a raw onion in the other, glaring around the captured bridge. It could only be that, though it was in the bows rather than the waist. The viewscreens were still in operation: smaller than human eyes found comfortable, but revealing the same pattern of stars, surely by the same kind of optical compensators. A control console made a semicircle at the forward bulkhead, too big for a solitary human to operate. Yet presumably the designer had only had one pilot in mind, for a single seat had been placed in the middle of the arc.

Had been. A short metal post rose from the deck. Similar structures stood at other points, and boltholes showed where chairs (?) were once fastened to them. But the seats had been removed.

"Pilot sat there at the center, I'd guess, when they weren't simply running on automatic," Torrance hazarded. "Navigator and communications officer . . . here and here? I'm not sure. Anyhow, they probably didn't use a copilot, but that chair bollard at the after end of the room suggests that an extra officer sat in

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reserve, ready to take over."

Van Rijn munched his onion and tugged his goatee. "Pestish big, this panel," he said. "Must be a race of bloody-be-damned octopuses, ha? Look how complicated."

He waved the salami around the half-circle. The console, which seemed to be of some fluorocarbon polymer, held very few switches or buttons, but scores of flat luminous plates, each about twenty centimeters square. Some of them were depressed. Evidently these were the controls. Cautious experiment had shown that a stiff push was needed to budge them. The experiment had ended then and there, for the ship's cargo lock had opened and a good deal of air was lost before Torrance slapped the plate he had been testing hard enough to make the hull reseal itself. One should not tinker with the atomic-powered unknown; most especially not in galactic space.

"They must be strong like horses, to steer by this system without getting exhausted," went on Van Rijn. "The size of everything tells likewise, *nie?*"

"Well, not exactly, sir," said Torrance. "The viewscreens seem made for dwarfs. The meters even more so." He pointed to a bank of instruments, no larger than buttons, on each of which a single number glowed. (Or letter, or odeogram, or what? They looked vaguely Old Chinese.) Occasionally a symbol changed value. "A human couldn't use these long without severe eyestrain. Of course, having eyes better adapted to close work than ours doesn't prove they are not giants. Certainly that switch couldn't be reached from here without long arms, and seems meant for big hands." By standing on tiptoe, he touched it himself: an outsize double-pole affair set overhead, just above the pilot's hypothetical seat.

The switch fell open.

A roar came from aft. Torrance lurched backward under a sudden force. He caught at a shelf on the after bulkhead to steady himself. Its thin metal buckled as he clutched. "Devilfish and dunderheads!" cried Van Rijn. Bracing his columnar legs, he reached up and shoved the switch back into position. The noise ended. Normality returned. Torrance hastened to the bridge doorway, a tall arch, and shouted down the corridor beyond: "It's O.K.! Don't worry! We've got it under control!"

"What the blue blinking blazes happened?" demanded Van Rijn, in somewhat more high-powered words.

Torrance mastered a slight case of the shakes. "Emergency switch, I'd say." His tone wavered. "Turns on the gravitic field full speed ahead, not wasting any force on acceleration compensators. Of course, we being in hyperdrive, it wasn't very effective. Only gave us a, uh, less than one-gee push, intrinsic. In normal state we'd have accelerated several gees, at least. It's for quick getaways and . . . and—"

"And you, with brains like fermented gravy and bananas for fin-

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gers, went ahead and yanked it open!"

Torrance felt himself redden. "How was I to know, sir? I must've applied less than half a kilo of force. Emergency switches aren't hair-triggered, after all! Considering how much it takes to move one of those control plates, who'd have thought the switch would respond to so little?"

Van Rijn took a closer look. "I see now there is a hook to secure it by," he said. "Must be they use that when the ship's on a high-gravity planet." He peered down a hole near the center of the panel, about one centimeter in diameter and fifteen deep. At the bottom a small key projected. "This must be another special control, ha? Safer than that switch. You would need thin-nosed pliers to make a turning of it." He scratched his pomaded curls. "But then why is not the plier's hanging handy? I don't see even a hook or bracket or drawer for them."

"I don't care," said Torrance. "When the whole interior's been stripped—There's nothing but a slag-heap in the engine room, I tell you, fused metal, carbonized plastic . . . bedding, furniture, anything they thought might give us a clue to their identity, all melted down in a jury-rigged cauldron. They used their own converter to supply heat. That was the cause of the neutrino flux Yamamura observed. They must have worked like demons."

"But they did not destroy all needful tools and machines, surely? Simpler then they should blow up their whole ship, and us with it. I was sweating like a hog, me, for fear they would do that. Not so good a way for a poor sinful old man to end his days, blown into radioactive stinks three hundred light-years from the vineyards of Earth."

"N-n-no. As far as we can tell from a cursory examination, they didn't sabotage anything absolutely vital. We can't be sure, of course. Yamamura's gang would need weeks just to get a general idea of how this ship is put together, let alone the practical details of operating it. But I agree, the crew isn't bent on suicide. They've got us more neatly trapped than they know, even. Bound helplessly through space—toward their home star, maybe—in any event, almost at right angles to the course we want."

Torrance led the way out. "Suppose we go have a more thorough look at the zoo, sir," he went on. "Yamamura talked about setting up some equipment . . . to help us tell the crew from the animals!"

The main hold comprised almost half the volume of the great ship. A corridor below, a catwalk above, ran through a double row of two-decker cubicles. These numbered ninety-six, and were identical. Each was about five meters on a side, with adjustable fluorescent plates in the ceiling and a springy, presumably inert plastic on the floor. Shelves and parallel bars ran along the side walls, for the benefit of animals which liked

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jumping or climbing. The rear wall was connected to well-shielded machines; Yamamura didn't dare tamper with these, but said they obviously regulated atmosphere, temperature, gravity, sanitation, and other environmental factors within each "cage." The front wall, facing on corridor and catwalk, was transparent. It held a stout air lock, almost as high as the cubicle itself, motorized but controlled by simple wheels inside and out. Only a few compartments were empty.

The humans had not strung fluoros in this hold, for it wasn't necessary. Torrance and Van Rijn walked through shadows, among monsters; the simulated light of a dozen different suns streamed around them, red, orange, yellow, greenish, and harsh electric blue.

A thing like a giant shark, save that tendrils fluttered about its head, swam in a waterfilled cubicle among fronded seaweeds. Next to it was a cageful of tiny flying reptiles, their scales aglitter in prismatic hues, weaving and dodging through the air. On the opposite side, four mammals crouched among yellow mists: beautiful creatures, the size of a bear, vividly tiger-striped, walking mostly on all fours but occasionally standing up; then you noticed the retractible claws between stubby fingers, and the carnivore jaws on the massive heads. Further on the humans passed half a dozen sleek red beasts like six-legged otters, frolicking in a tank of water provided for them. The environmental machines must have decided this was their feeding time, for a hopper spewed chunks of proteinaceous material into a trough and the animals lolloped over to rip it with their fangs.

"Automatic feeding," Torrance observed. "I think probably the food is synthesized on the spot, according to the specifications of each individual species as determined by biochemical methods. For the crew, also. At least, we haven't found anything like a galley."

Van Rijn shuddered. "Nothing but synthetics? Not even a little glass Genever before dinner?" He brightened. "Ha, maybe here we find a good new market. And until they learn the situation, we can charge them triple prices."

"First," clipped Torrance, "we've got to find them."

Yamamura stood near the middle of the hold, focusing a set of instruments on a certain cage. Jeri stood by, handing him what he asked for, plugging and unplugging at a small powerpack. Van Rijn hove into view. "What goes on, anyhows?" he asked.

The chief engineer turned a patient brown face to him. "I've got the rest of the crew examining the ship in detail, sir," he said. "I'll join them as soon as I've gotten Freelady Kofoed trained at this particular job. She can handle the routine of it while the rest of us use our special skills to —" His words trailed off. He grinned ruefully. "To poke and prod gizmos we can't possibly understand in less than a month of work, with our limited research tools."

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"A month we have not got," said Van Rijn. "You are here checking conditions inside each individual cage?"

"Yes, sir. They're metered, of course, but we can't read the meters, so we have to do the job ourselves. I've haywired this stuff together, to give an approximate value of gravity, atmospheric pressure and composition, temperature, illumination spectrum, and so forth. It's slow work, mostly because of all the arithmetic needed to turn the dial readings into such data. Luckily, we don't have to test every cubicle, or even most of them."

"No," said Van Rijn. "Even to a union organizer, obvious this ship was never made by fishes or birds. In fact, some kind of hands is always necessary."

"Or tentacles." Van Rijn nodded at the compartment before him. The light within was dim red. Several black creatures could be seen walking restlessly about. They had stumpy-legged quadrupedal bodies, from which torsos rose centaur fashion toward heads armored in some bony material. Below the faceless heads were six thick, ropy arms, set in triplets. Two of these ended in three boneless but probably strong fingers.

"I suspect these are our coy friends," said Yamamura. "If so, we'll have a deuce of a time. They breathe hydrogen under high pressure and triple gravity, at a temperature of seventy below."

"Are they the only ones who like that kind of weather?" asked Torrance.

Yamamura gave him a sharp look. "I see what you're getting at, skipper. No, they aren't. In the course of putting this apparatus together and testing it, I've already found three other cubicles where conditions are similar. And in those, the animals are obviously just animals: snakes and so on, which couldn't possibly have built this ship."

"But then these octopus-horses can't be the crew, can they?" asked Jeri timidly. "I mean, if the crew were collecting animals from other planets, they wouldn't take home animals along, would they?"

"They might," said Van Rijn. "We have a cat and a couple parrots aboard the *Hebe G.B., nie?* Or, there are many planets with very similar conditions of the hydrogen sort, just like Earth and Freya are much-alike oxygen planets. So that proves nothing." He turned toward Yamamura, rather like a rotating globe himself. "But see here, even if the crew did pump out all the air before we boarded, why not check their reserve tanks? If we find air stored away just like these diddlers here are breathing—"

"I thought of that," said Yamamura. "In fact, it was almost the first thing I told the men to look for. They've located nothing. I don't think they'll have any success, either. Because what they did find was an adjustable catalytic manifold. At least, it looks as if it should be, though we'd need days to find out

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for certain. Anyhow, my guess is that it renews exhausted air and acts as a chemosynthesizer to replace losses from a charge of simple inorganic compounds. The crew probably bled all the ship's air into space before we boarded. When we go away, if we do, they'll open the door of their particular cage a crack, so its air can trickle out. The environmental adjuster will automatically force the chemosynthesizer to replace this. Eventually the ship'll be full of enough of this kind of air for them to venture forth and adjust things more precisely." He shrugged. "That's assuming they even need to. Perhaps Earth-type conditions suit them perfectly well."

"Uh, yes," said Torrance. "Suppose we look around some more, and line up the possibly intelligent species."

Van Rijn trundled along with him. "What sort intelligence they got, these bespattered aliens?" he grumbled. "Why try this stupid masquerade in the first places?"

"It's not too stupid to have worked so far," said Torrance dryly. "We're being carried along on a ship we don't know how to stop. They must hope we'll either give up and depart, or else that we'll remain baffled until the ship enters their home region. At which time, quite probably a naval vessel—or whatever they've got—will detect us, close in, and board us to check up on what's happened."

He paused before a compartment. "I wonder—"

The quadruped within was the size of an elephant, though with a more slender build indicating a lower gravity than Earth's. Its skin was green and faintly scaled, a ruff of hair along the back. The eyes with which it looked out were alert and enigmatic. It had an elephantlike trunk, terminating in a ring of pseudodactyls which must be as strong and sensitive as human fingers.

"How much could a one-armed race accomplish?" mused Torrance. "About as much as we, I imagine, if not quite so easily. And sheer strength would compensate. That trunk could bend an iron bar."

Van Rijn grunted and went past a cubicle of feathered ungulates. He stopped before the next one. "Now here are some beasts might do," he said. "We had one like them on Earth once. What they called it? Quintilla? No, gorilla. Or chimpanzee, better, of gorilla size."

Torrance felt his heart thud. Two adjoining sections each held four animals of a kind which looked extremely hopeful. They were bipedal, short-legged and long-armed. Standing two meters tall, with a three-meter armspan, one of them could certainly operate that control console alone. The wrists, thick as a man's thighs, ended in proportionate hands, four-digited including a true thumb. The three-toed feet were specialized for walking, like man's feet. Their bodies were covered with brown fleece. Their heads were comparatively small, rising almost to a point, with massive snouts and beady

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eyes under cavernous brow ridges. As they wandered aimlessly about, Torrance saw that they were divided among males and females. On the sides of each neck he noticed two lumens closed by sphincters. The light upon them was the familiar yellowish-white of a Sol-type star.

He forced himself to say, "I'm not sure. Those huge jaws must demand corresponding maxillary muscles, attaching to a ridge on top of the skull. Which'd restrict the cranial capacity."

"Suppose they got brains in their bellies," said Van Rijn.

"Well, some people do," murmured Torrance. As the merchant choked, he added in haste, "No, actually, sir, that's hardly believable. Neural paths would get too long, and so forth. Every animal I know of, if it has a central nervous system at all, keeps the brain close to the principal sense organs: which are usually located in the head. To be sure, a relatively small brain, within limits, doesn't mean these creatures are not intelligent. Their neurones might well be more efficient than ours."

"Humph and hassenpfeffer!" said Van Rijn. "Might, might, might!" As they continued among strange shapes: "We can't go too much by atmosphere or light, either. If hiding, the crew could vary conditions quite a bit from their norm without hurting themselves. Gravity, too, by twenty or thirty per cent."

"I hope they breathe oxygen, though—Hoy!" Torrance stopped After a moment, he realized what was so eerie about the several forms under the orange glow. They were chitinous-armored, not much bigger than a squarish military helmet and about the same shape. Four stumpy legs projected from beneath to carry them awkwardly about on taloned feet; also a pair of short tentacles ending in a bush of cilia. There was nothing special about them, as extra-terrestrial animals go, except the two eyes which gazed from beneath each helmet: as large and somehow human as—well—the eyes of an octopus.

"Turtles," snorted Van Rijn. "Armadillos at most."

"There can't be any harm in letting Jer . . . Miss Kofoed check their environment too," said Torrance.

"It can waste time."

"I wonder what they eat. I don't see any mouths."

"Those tentacles look like capillary suckers. I bet they are parasites, or overgrown leeches, or something else like one of my competitors. Come along."

"What do we do after we've established which species could possibly be the crew?" aske Torrance. "Try to communicate with each in turn?"

"Not much use, that. They hide because they don't want to communicate. Unless we can prove to them we are not Adderkops—But hard to see how."

"Wait! Why'd they conceal themselves at all, if they've had contact with the Adderkops?"

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"I think I tell you that, by damn," said Van Rijn. "To give them a name, let us call this unknown race the Eksers. So. The Eksers been traveling space for some time, but space is so big they never bumped into humans. Then the Adderkop nation arises, in this sector where humans never was before. The Eksers hear about this awful new species which has gotten into space also. They land on primitive planets where Adderkops have made raids, talk to natives, maybe plant automatic cameras where they think raids will soon come, maybe spy on Adderkop camps from afar or capture a lone Adderkop ship. So they know what humans look like, but not much else. They do not want humans to know about them, so they shun contact; they are not looking for trouble. Not before they are all prepared to fight a war, at least. Hell's sputtering griddles! Torrance, we have *got* to establish our bona fides with this crew, so they take us to Freya and afterward go tell their leaders all humans are not so bad as the slime-begotten Adderkops. Otherwise, maybe we wake up one day with some planets attacked by Eksers, and before the fighting ends, we have spent billions of credits!" He shook his fists in the air and bellowed like a wounded bull. "It is our duty to prevent this!"

"Our first duty is to get home alive, I'd say," Torrance answered curtly. "I have a wife and kids."

"Then stop throwing sheepish eyes at Jeri Kofoed. I saw her first."

The search turned up one more possibility. Four organisms the length of a man and the build of thick-legged caterpillars dwelt under greenish light. Their bodies were dark blue, spotted with silver. A torso akin to that of the tentacled centauroids, but stockier, carried two true arms. The hands lacked thumbs, but six fingers arranged around a three-quarter circle could accomplish much the same thing.

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Not that adequate hands prove effective intelligence; on Earth, not only simians but a number of reptiles and amphibia boast as much, even if man has the best, and man's apish ancestors were as well-equipped in this respect as we are today. However, the round flat-faced heads of these beings, the large bright eyes beneath feathery antennae of obscure function, the small jaws and delicate lips, looked promising.

Promising of what? thought Torrance.

Three Earth-days later, he hurried down a central corridor toward the Ekser engine room.

The passage was a great hemicylinder lined with the same rubbery gray plastic as the cages, so that footfalls were silent and spoken words weirdly unresonant. But a deeper vibration went through it, the almost subliminal drone of the hyperengine, driving the ship into darkness, toward an unknown star, and announcing their presence to any hunter straying within a light-year of them. The fluoros strung by the humans were far apart, so that one passed through bands of humming shadow. Doorless rooms opened off the hallway. Some were still full of supplies, and however peculiar the shape of tools and containers might be, however unguessable their purpose, this was a reassurance that one still lived, not yet a ghost aboard the Flying Dutchman. Other cabins had been inhabited. And their bareness made Torrance's skin crawl.

Nowhere did a personal trace remain. Books, both folio and micro, survived, but in the finely printed symbology of a foreign planet. Empty places on the shelves suggested that all illustrated volumes had been sacrificed. Certainly one could see where pictures stuck on the walls had been ripped down. In the big private cabins, the still larger one which might have been a saloon, as well as in the engine room and workshop and bridge, only the bollards to which furniture had been bolted were left. Long low niches and small cubbyholes were built into the cabin bulkheads, but when all bedding had been thrown into a white-hot cauldron, how could one guess which were the bunks . . . if either kind were? Clothing, ornaments, cooking and eating utensils, everything was destroyed. One room must have been a lavatory, but all the facilities had been ripped out. Another might have been used for scientific studies, presumably of captured animals, but was so gutted that no human was certain.

You've got to admire them, Torrance thought. Captured by beings whom they had every reason to think of as conscienceless monsters, the aliens had not taken the easy way out, the atomic explosion that would annihilate both crews. They might have, except for the chance of this being a zoo ship. But given a hope of survival, they snatched it, with an imaginative daring few humans could have matched. Now they sat in plain view, waiting for the monsters

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to depart—without wrecking their ship in mere spitefulness—or for a naval vessel of their own to rescue them. They had no means of knowing their captors were not Adderkops, or that this sector would soon be filled with Adderkop squadrons; the vandits rarely ventured even this close to Valhalla. Within the limits of available information, the aliens were acting with complete logic. But the nerve it took!

I wish we could identify them and make friends, thought Torrance. *The Eksers would be good friends for Earth to have. Or Ramanujan, or Freya, or the entire Polesothechnic League.* With a lopsided grin: *I'll bet they'd be nowhere near as easy to swindle as Old Nick thinks. They might well swindle him. That I'd love to see!*

My reason is more personal, though, he thought with a return of bleakness. *If we don't clear up this misunderstanding soon, neither they nor we will be around. I mean soon. If we have another three or four days of grace, we're lucky.*

The passage opened on a well, with ramps curving down either side to a pair of automatic doors. One door led to the engine room, Torrance knew. Behind it, a nuclear converter powered the ship's electrical system, gravitic cones, and hyperdrive, and the principles on which this was done were familiar to him but the actual machines were enigmas cased in metal and in foreign symbols. He took the other door, which opened on a workshop. A good deal of the equipment here was identifiable, however distorted to his eyes: lathe, drill press, oscilloscope, crystal tester. Much else was mystery. Yamamura sat at an improvised workbench, fitting together a piece of electronic apparatus. Several other devices, haywired on headboards, stood close by. His face was shockingly haggard, and his hands trembled. He'd been working this whole time, with stimpills to keep him awake.

As Torrance approached, the engineer was talking with Betancourt, the communications man. The entire crew of the *Hebe G.B.* were under Yamamura's direction, in a frantic attempt to outflank the Eksers by learning on their own how to operate this ship.

"I've identified the basic electrical arrangement, sir," Betancourt was saying. "They don't tap the converter directly, like us; so evidently they haven't developed our stepdown methods. Instead, they use a heat exchanger to run an extremely large generator—yeah, the same thing you guessed was an armature-type dynamo—and draw A.C. for the ship off that. Where D.C. is needed, the A.C. passes through a set of rectifier plates which, by looking at 'em, I'm sure must be copper oxide. They're bare, behind a safety screen, though so much current goes through that they're too hot to look at close up. It all seems kind of primitive to me."

"Or else merely different," sighed Yamamura. "We use a light-element-

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fusion converter, one of whose advantages is that it can develop electric current directly. They may have perfected a power plant which utilizes moderately heavy elements with small positive packing fractions. I remember that was tried on Earth a long while ago, and given up as impractical. But maybe the Eksers are better engineers than us. Such a system would have the advantage of needing less refinement of fuel—which'd be a real advantage to a ship knocking about among unexplored planets. Maybe enough to justify that clumsy heat exchanger and rectifier system. We simply don't know."

He stared head-shakingly at the wires he was soldering. "We don't know a thing," he said. Seeing Torrance: "Well, carry on, Freeman Betancourt. And remember, *festina lente*."

"For fear of wrecking the ship?" asked the captain.

Yamamura nodded. "The Eksers would've known a small craft like ours couldn't generate a big enough hyperforce field to tug their own ship home," he replied. "So they'll have made sure no prize crew could make off with it. Some of the stuff may be booby-trapped to wreck itself if it isn't handled just so; and how'd we ever make repairs? Hence we're proceeding with the utmost caution. So cautiously that we haven't a prayer of figuring out the controls before the Adderkops find us."

"It keeps the crew busy, though."

"Which is useful. Uh-huh. Well, sir, I've about got my basic apparatus set up. Everything seems to test O.K. Now let me know which animal you want to investigate first." As Torrance hesitated, the engineer explained: "I have to adapt the equipment for the creature in question, you see. Especially if it's a hydrogen breather."

Torrance shook his head. "Oxygen. In fact, they live under conditions so much like ours that we can walk right into their cages. The gorilloids. That's what Jeri and I have named them. Those woolly, two-meter-tall bipeds with the ape faces."

Yamamura made an ape face of his own. Brutes that powerful? Have they shown any sign of intelligence?"

"No. But then, would you expect the Eksers to do so? Jeri Kofoed and I have been parading in front of the cages of all the possible species, making signs, drawing pictures, everything we could think of, trying to get the message across that we are not Adderkops and the genuine article is chasing us. No luck, of course. All the animals did give us an interested regard except the gorilloids . . . which may or may not prove anything."

"What animals, now? I've been so blinking busy—"

"Well, we call 'em the tiger apes, the tentacle centaurs, the elephantoid, the helmet beasts, and the caterpiggles. That's stretching things, I know; the tiger apes and the helmet beasts are highly improbable, to say the least, and the elephantoid isn't

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much more convincing. The gorilloids have the right size and the most efficient-looking hands, and they're oxygen breathers as I said, so we may as well take them first. Next in order of likelihood, I'd guess, are the caterpiggles and the tentacle centaurs. But the caterpiggles, though oxygen breathers, are from a high-gravity planet; their air pressure would give us narcosis in no time. The tentacle centaurs breathe hydrogen. In either case, we'd have to work in space armor."

"The gorilloids will be quite bad enough, thank you kindly!"

Torrance looked at the workbench. "What exactly do you plan to do?" he asked. "I've been too busy with my own end of this affair to learn any details of yours."

"I've adapted some things from the medical kit," said Yamamura. "A sort of ophthalmoscope, for example; because the ship's instruments use color codes and finely printed symbols, so that the Eksers are bound to have eyes at least as good as ours. Then this here's a nervous-impulse tracer. It detects synaptic flows and casts a three-dimensional image into yonder crystal box, so we can see the whole nervous system functioning as a set of luminous traces. By correlating this with gross anatomy, we can roughly identify the sympathetic and parasympathetic systems—or their equivalents—I hope. And the brain. And, what's really to the point, the degree of brain activity more or less independent of the other nerve paths. That is, whether the animal is thinking."

He shrugged. "It tests out fine on me. Whether it'll work on a nonhuman, especially in a different sort of atmosphere, I do not know. I'm sure it'll develop bugs."

"'We can but try,'" quoted Torrance wearily.

"I suppose Old Nick is sitting and thinking," said Yamamura in an edged voice. "I haven't seen him for quite some time."

"He's not been helping Jeri and me either," said Torrance. "Told us our attempt to communicate was futile until we could prove to the Eksers that we knew who they were. And even after that, he said, the only communication first will be by gesture made with a pistol."

"He's probably right."

"He's not right! Logically, perhaps, but not psychologically. Or morally. He sits in his suite with a case of brandy and a box of cigars. The cook, who could be down here helping you, is kept aboard the yacht to fix him his gourmet meals. You'd think he didn't care if we're blown out of the sky!!"

He remembered his oath of fealty, his official position, and so on and so on. They seemed nonsensical enough, here on the edge of extinction. But habit was strong. He swallowed and said harshly: "Sorry. Please ignore what I said. When you're ready, Freeman Yamamura, we'll test the gorilloids."

Six men and Jeri stood by in the passage with drawn blasters. Tor-

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rance hoped fervently they wouldn't have to shoot. He hoped even more that if they did have to, he'd still be alive.

He gestured to the four crewmen at his back. "O.K., boys." He wet his lips. His heart thuttered. Being a captain and a Lodgemaster was very fine until moments like this came, when you must make a return for all your special privileges.

He spun the outside control wheel. The air-lock motor hummed and opened the doors. He stepped through, into a cage of gorilloids.

Pressure differentials weren't enough to worry about, but after all this time at one-fourth gee, to enter a field only ten per cent less than Earth's was like a blow. He lurched, almost fell, gasped in an air warm and thick and full of unnamed stenches. Sagging back against the wall, he stared across the floor at the four bipeds. Their brown fleecy bodies loomed unfairly tall, up and up to the broad coarse faces. Eyes overshadowed by brows glared at him. He clapped a hand on his stun pistol. He didn't want to shoot it, either. No telling what supersonics might do to a nonhuman nervous system; and if these were in truth the crewfolk, the worst thing he could do was inflict serious injury on one of them. But he wasn't used to being small and frail. The knurled handgrip was a comfort.

A male growled, deep in his chest, and advanced a step. His pointed head thrust forward, the sphincters in his neck opened and shut like sucking mouths, his jaws gaped to show the white teeth.

Torrance backed toward a corner. "I'll try to attract that one in the lead away from the others," he called softly. "Then get him."

"Aye." A spacehand, a stocky slant-eyed nomad from Altai uncoiled a lariat. Behind him, the other three spread a net woven for this purpose.

The gorilloid paused. A female hooted. The male seemed to draw resolution from her. He waved the others back with a strangely human-like gesture and stalked toward Torrance.

The captain drew his stunner, pointed it shakily, resheathed it and held out both hands. "Friend," he croaked.

His hope that the masquerade might be dropped became suddenly ridiculous. He sprang back toward the air lock. The gorilloid snarled and snatched at him. Torrance wasn't fast enough. The hand ripped his shirt open and left a bloody trail on his chest. He went to hands and knees, stabbed with pain. The Altaian's lasso whirled and snaked forth. Caught around the ankles, the gorilloid crashed. His weight shook the cubicle.

"Get him! Watch out for his arms! Here—"

Torrance staggered back to his feet. Beyond the melee, where four men strove to wind a roaring, struggling monster in a net, he saw the other three creatures. They were crowded into the opposite corner,

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howling in basso. The compartment was like the inside of a drum.

"Get him out," choked Torrance. "Before the others charge."

He aimed his stunner again. If intelligent, they'd know this was a weapon. They might attack anyway . . . Deftly, the man from Alta roped an arm, snubbed his lariat around the gargantuan torso, and made it fast by a slip knot. The net came into position. Helpless in cords of wire-strong fiber, the gorilloid was dragged to the entrance. Another male advanced, step by jerky step. Torrance stood his ground. The animal ululation and human shouting surfed about him, within him. His wound throbbed. He saw with unnatural clarity: the muzzle full of teeth that could snap his head off, the little dull eyes turned red with fury, the hands so much like his own but black-skinned, four-fingered, and enormous—

"All clear, skipper!"

The gorilloid lunged. Torrance scrambled through the air lock chamber. The giant followed. Torrance braced himself in the corridor and aimed his stun pistol. The gorilloid halted, shivered, looked around in something resembling bewilderment, and retreated. Torrance closed the air lock.

Then he sat down and trembled.

Jeri bent over him. "Are you all right?" she breathed. "Oh! You've been hurt!"

"Nothing much," he mumbled. "Gimme a cigarette."

She took one from her belt pouch and said with a crispness he admired, "I suppose it is just a bruise and a deep scratch. But we'd better check it anyway, and sterilize. Might be infected."

He nodded but remained where he was until he had finished the cigarette. Farther down the corridor, Yamamura's men got their captive secured to a steel framework. Unharmed but helpless, the brute yelped and tried to bite as the engineer approached with his equipment. Returning him to the cubicle afterward was likely to be almost as tough as getting him out.

Torrance rose. Through the transparent wall, he saw a female gorilloid viciously pulling something to shreds, and realized he had lost his turban when he was knocked over. He sighed. "Nothing much we can do till Yamamura gives us a verdict," he said. "Come on, let's go rest a while."

"Sickbay first," said Jeri firmly. She took his arm. They went to the entryhole, through the tube, and into the steady half-weight of the *Hebe G.B.* which Van Rijn preferred. Little was said while Jeri got Torrance's shirt off, swabbed the wound with universal disinfectant, which stung like hell, and bandaged it. Afterward he suggested a drink.

They entered the saloon. To their surprise, and to Torrance's displeasure, Van Rijn was there. He sat at the inlaid mahogany table, dressed in snuff-stained lace and his usual sarong, a bottle in one hand and a

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Trichinopoly cigar in the other. A litter of papers lay before him.

"Ah, so," he said, glancing up. "What gives?"

"They're testing a gorilloid now." Torrance flung himself into a chair. Since the steward had been drafted for the capture party, Jeri went after drinks. Her voice floated back, defiant:

"Captain Torrance was almost killed in the process. Couldn't you at least come watch, Nick?"

"What use I should watch, like some tourist with haddock eyes?" scoffed the merchant. "I make no skeletons about it, I am too old and fat to help chase large economy-size apes. Nor am I so technical I can twiddle knobs for Yamamura." He took a puff of his cigar and added complacently, "Besides, that is not my job. I am no kind of specialist, I have no fine university degrees, I learned in the school of hard knockers. But what I learned is how to make men do things for me, and then how to make something profitable from all their doings."

Torrance breathed out, long and slow. With the tension eased, he was beginning to feel immensely tired. "What're you checking over?" he asked.

"Reports of engineer studies on the Ekser ship," said Van Rijn. "I told everybody should take full notes on what they observed. Somewhere in those notes is maybe a clue we can use. If the gorilloids are not the Eksers, I mean. The gorilloids are possible, and I see no way to eliminate them except by Yamamura's checkers."

Torrance rubbed his eyes. "They're not entirely plausible," he said. "Most of the stuff we've found seems meant for big hands. But some of the tools, especially, are so small that—Oh, well, I suppose a nonhuman might be as puzzled by an assortment of our own tools. Does it really make sense that the same race would use sledge hammers and etching needles?"

Jeri came back with two stiff Scotch-and-sodas. His gaze followed her. In a tight blouse and half knee-length skirt, she was worth following. She sat down next to him rather than to Van Rijn, whose jet eyes narrowed.

However, the older man spoke mildly: "I would like if you should list for me, here and now, the other possibilities, with your reasons for thinking of them. I have seen them too, natural, but my own ideas are not all clear yet and maybe something that occurs to you would joggle my head."

Torrance nodded. One might as well talk shop, even though he'd been over this ground a dozen times before with Jeri and Yamamura.

"Well," he said, "the tentacle centaurs appear very likely. You know the ones I mean. They live under red light and about half again Earth's gravity. A dim sun and a low temperature must make it possible for their planet to retain hydrogen, because that's what they breathe, hydro-

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gen and argon. You know how they look: bodies sort of like rhinoceri, torsos with bone-plated heads and fingered tentacles. Like the gorilloids, they're big enough to pilot this ship easily.

"All the others are oxygen breathers. The ones we call caterpiggles—the long, many-legged, blue-and-silver ones, with the peculiar hands and the particularly intelligent-looking faces—they're from an oddball world. It must be big. They're under three gees in their cage, which can't be a red herring for this length of time. Body fluid adjustment would go out of kilter, if they're used to much lower weight. Even so, their planet has oxygen and nitrogen rather than hydrogen, under a dozen Earth-atmospheres' pressure. The temperature is rather high, fifty degrees. I imagine their world, though of nearly Jovian mass, is so close to its sun that the hydrogen was boiled off, leaving a clear field for evolution similar to Earth's.

"The elephantoid comes from a planet with only about half our gravity. He's the single big fellow with a trunk ending in fingers. He gets by in air too thin for us, which indicates the gravity in his cubicle isn't faked either."

Torrance took a long drink. "The rest all live under pretty terrestroid conditions," he resumed. "For that reason, I wish they were more probable. But actually, except the gorilloids, they seem like long shots. The helmet beasts—"

"What's that?" asked Van Rijn.

"Oh, you remember," said Jeri. "Those eight or nine things like humpbacked turtles, not much bigger than your head. They crawl around on clawed feet, waving little tentacles that end in filaments. They blot up food through those: soupy stuff the machines dump into their trough. They haven't anything like effective hands—the tentacles could only do a few very simple things—but we gave them some time because they do seem to have better developed eyes than parasites usually do."

"Parasites don't evolve intelligence," said Van Rijn. "They got better ways to make a living, by damn. Better make sure the helmet beasts really are parasites—in their home environments—and got no hands tucked under those shells—before you quite write them off. Who else you got?"

"The tiger apes," said Torrance. "Those striped carnivores built something like bears. They spend most of their time on all fours, but they do stand up and walk on their hind legs sometimes, and they do have hands. Clumsy, thumbless ones, with retractable claws, but on all their limbs. Are four hands without thumbs as good as two with? I don't know. I'm too tired to think."

"And that's all, ha?" Van Rijn tilted the bottle to his lips. After a prolonged gurgling he set it down, belched, and blew smoke through his majestic nose. "Who's to try next, if the gorilloids flunk?"

"It better be the caterpiggles, in spite of the air pressure," said Jeri.

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"Then . . . oh . . . the tentacle centaurs, I suppose. Then maybe the—"

"Horse maneuvers!" Van Rijn's fist struck the table. The bottle and glasses jumped. "How long it takes to catch and check each one? Hours, *nie?* And in between times, takes many more hours to adjust the apparatus and chase out all the hiccups it develops under a new set of conditions. Also, Yamamura will collapse if he can't sleep soon, and who else we got can do this? All the whiles, the forstunken Adderkops get closer. We have not got time for that method! If the gorilloids don't fan out, then only logic will help us. We must deduce from the facts

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we have, who the Eksers are."

"Go ahead." Torrance drained his glass. "I'm going to take a nap."

Van Rijn purpled. "That's right!" he huffed. "Be like everybody elses. Loaf and play, dance and sing, enjoy yourselves the liver-long day. Because you always got poor old Nicholas Van Rijn there, to heap the work and worry on his back. Oh, dear St. Dismas, why can't you at least make some *one* other person in this whole universe do something useful?"

Torrance was awakened by Yamamura. The gorilloids were not the Eksers. They were color-blind and incapable of focusing on the ship's instruments; their brains were small, with nearly the whole mass devoted to purely animal functions. He estimated their intelligence as equal to a dog's.

The captain stood on the bridge of the yacht, because it was a familiar place, and tried to accustom himself to being doomed.

Space had never seemed so beautiful as now. He was not well acquainted with the local constellations, but his trained gaze identified Perseus, Auriga, Taurus, not much distorted since they lay in the direction of Earth. (And of Ramanujan, where gilt towers rose out of mists to catch the first sunlight, blinding against blue Mount Gandhi.) A few individuals could also be picked out, ruby Betelgeuse, amber Spica, the pilot stars by which he had steered through his whole working life. Otherwise the sky was aswarm with small frosty fires, across blackness unclouded and endless. The Milky Way girdled it with cool silver, a nebula glowed faint and green, another galaxy spiraled on the mysterious edge of visibility. He thought less about the planets he had trod, even his own, than about this faring between them which was soon to terminate. For end it would, in a burst of violence too swift to be felt. Better go out thus cleanly when the Adderkops came, than into their dungeons.

He stubbed out his cigarette. Returning, his hand caressed the dear shapes of controls. He knew each switch and knob as well as he knew his own fingers. This ship was his; in a way, himself. Not like that other, its senseless control board which needed a giant and a dwarf, whose emergency switch fell under a mere slap if it wasn't hooked in place, whose—

A light footfall brought him twisting around. Irrationally, so strained was he, his heart flew up within him. When he saw it was Jeri, he eased his muscles, but the pulse continued quick in his blood.

She advanced slowly. The overhead light gleamed on her yellow hair and in the blue of her eyes. But she avoided his glance and her mouth was not quite steady.

"What brings you here?" he asked. His tone fell even more soft than he had intended.

"Oh . . . the same as you." She

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stared out the viewscreen. During the time since they captured the alien ship, or it captured them, a red star off the port bow had visibly grown. Now it burned baleful as they passed, a light-year distant. She grimaced and turned her back to it. "Yamamura is readjusting the test apparatus," she said thinly. "No one else knows enough about it to help him, but he has the shakes so bad from exhaustion he can scarcely do the job himself.

Old Nick just sits in his suite, smoking and drinking. He's gone through one bottle already, and has now started on another. I couldn't breathe in there any longer, it was so smoky. And he won't say a word. Except to himself, in Malay or something. I couldn't stand it."

"We may as well wait," said Torrance. "We've done everything we can, till it's time to check a caterpiggle. We'll have to do that space-suited, in their own cage, and hope they don't all attack us."

She slumped. "Why bother?" she said. "I know the situation as well as you. Even if the caterpiggles are the Eksers, under those conditions we'll need a couple of days to prove it. I doubt if we have that much time left. If we start toward Valhalla two days from now, I'll bet we're detected and run down before we get there. Certainly, if the caterpiggles are only animals too, we'll never get time to test a third species. Why bother?"

"We've nothing else to do," said Torrance.

"Yes, we do. Not this ugly, futile squirming about, like cornered rats. Why can't we accept that we're going to die, and use the time to . . . to be human again?"

Startled, he looked back from the sky to her. "What do you mean?"

Her lashes fluttered downward. "I suppose that would depend on what we each prefer. Maybe you'd want to, well, get your thoughts in order or something."

"How about you?" he asked through his heartbeat.

"I'm not a thinker," she smiled forlornly. "I'm afraid I'm just a shallow sort of person. I'd like to enjoy life while I have it." She half turned from him. "But I can't find anyone I'd like to enjoy it with."

He, or his hands, grabbed her bare shoulders and spun her around to face him. She felt silken under his palms. "Are you sure you can't?" he said roughly. She closed her eyes and stood with face tilted upward, lips half parted. He kissed her. After a second she responded.

After a minute, Nicholas Van Rijn appeared in the doorway.

He stood an instant, pipe in hand, gun belted to his waist, before he flung the churchwarden shattering to the deck. "So!" he bellowed.

"Oh!" wailed Jeri.

She disengaged herself. A tide of rage mounted in Torrance. He knotted his fists and started toward Van Rijn.

"So!" repeated the merchant. The bulkheads seemed to quiver with his voice. "By louse-bitten damn, this is

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a fine thing for me to come on. Satan's tail in a mousetrap! I sit hour by hour sweating my brain to the bone for the sake of your worthless life, and all whiles you, you illegitimate spawn of a snake with dandruff and a cheese mite, here you are making up to my own secretary hired with my own hard-earned money! Gargoyles and Götterdammerung! Down on your knees and beg my pardon, or I mash you up and sell you for dogfood!"

Torrance stopped, a few centimeters from Van Rijn. He was slightly taller than the merchant, if less bulky, and at least thirty years younger. "Get out," he said in a strangled voice.

Van Rijn turned puce and gobbled at him.

"Get out," repeated Torrance. "I'm still the captain of this ship. I'll do what I please, without interference from any loud-mouthed parasite. Get off the bridge or I'll toss you out on your fat bottom!"

The color faded in Van Rijn's cheeks. He stood motionless for whole seconds. "Well, by damn," he whispered at last. "By damn and death, cubical. He has got the nerve to talk back."

His left fist came about in a roundhouse swing. Torrance blocked it, though the force nearly threw him off his feet. His own left smacked the merchant's stomach, sank a short ways into fat, encountered the muscles, and rebounded bruised. Then Van Rijn's right fist clopped. The cosmos exploded around Torrance. He flew up in the air, went over backward, and lay where he fell.

When awareness returned, Van Rijn was cradling his head and offering brandy, which a tearful Jeri had fetched. "Here, boy. Go slow there. A little nip of this, ha? That goes good. There, now, you only lost one tooth and we get that fixed at Freya. You can even put it on expense account. There, that makes you feel more happy, *nie?* Now, girl, Jarry, Jelly, whatever your name is, give me that stimpill. Down the hatchworks, boy. And then, upsy-rosy, onto your feet. You should not miss the fun."

One-handed, Van Rijn heaved Torrance erect. The captain leaned a while on the merchant, until the stimpill removed aches and dizziness. Then, huskily through swollen lips, he asked, "What's going on? What d' you mean?"

"Why, I know who the Eksers are. I came to get you, and we fetch them from their cage." Van Rijn nudged Torrance with a great splay thumb and whispered almost as softly as a hurricane: "Don't tell anyone or I have too many fights, but I like a brass-bound nerve like you got. When we get home, I think you transfer off this yacht to command of a trading squadron. How you like that, ha? But come, we still got a damn plenty of work to do."

Torrance followed him in a daze: through the small ship and the tube, into the alien, down a corridor and a ramp to the zoological hold. Van Rign gestured at the spacemen post-

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ed on guard lest the Eksers make a sally. They drew their guns and joined him, their weary slouch jerking to alertness when he stopped before an air lock.

"*Those?*" sputtered Torrance. "But . . . I thought—"

"You thought what they hoped you would think," said Van Rijn grandly. "The scheme was good. Might have worked, not counting the Adderkops, except that Nicholas Van Rijn was here. Now, then. We go in and take them all out, making a good show of our weapons. I hope we need not get too tough with them. I expect not, when we explain by drawings how we understand all their secret. Then they should take us to Valhalla, as we can show by those pretty astronautical diagrams Captain Torrance has already prepared. They will co-operate under threats, as prisoners, at first. But on the voyage, we can use the standard means to establish alimentary communications . . . no, terror and taxes, I mean rudimentary . . . anyhows, we get the idea across that all humans are not Adderkops and we want to be friends and sell them things. Hokay? We go!"

He marched through the air lock, scooped up a helmet beast, and bore it kicking out of its cage.

Torrance didn't have time for anything en route except his work. First the entryhole in the prize must be sealed, while supplies and equipment were carried over from the *Hebe G.B.* Then the yacht must be cast loose under her own hyperdrive; in the few hours before her converter quite burned out, she might draw an Adderkop in chase. Then the journey commenced, and though the Eksers laid a course as directed, they must be constantly watched lest they try some suicidal stunt. Every spare moment must be devoted to the urgent business of achieving a simple common language with them. Torrance must also supervise his crew, calm their fears, and maintain a detector-watch for enemy vessels. If any had been detected, the humans would have gone off hyperdrive and hoped they could lie low. None were, but the strain was considerable.

Occasionally he slept.

Thus he got no chance to talk to Van Rijn at length. He assumed the merchant had had a lucky hunch, and let it go at that.

Until Valhalla was a tiny yellow disk, outshining all other stars; and a League patrol ship closed on them; and, explanations being made, it gave them escort as they moved at sublight speed toward Freya.

The patrol captain intimated he'd like to come aboard. Torrance stalled him. "When we're in orbit, Freeman Agilik, I'll be delighted. But right now, things are pretty disorganized. You can understand that, I'm sure."

He switched off the alien telecom he had now learned to operate. "I'd better go below and clean up," he said. "Haven't had a bath since we abandoned the yacht. Carry on, Freeman Lafarge." He hesitated. "And, uh, Freeman Jukh-Barklakh."

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Jukh grunted something. The gorilloid was too busy to talk, squatting where a pilot seat should have been, his big hands slapping control plates as he edged the ship into a hyperbolic path. Barklakh, the helmet beast on his shoulders, who had no vocal cords of his own, waved a tentacle before he dipped it into the protective shaftlet to turn a delicate adjustment key. The other tentacle remained buried on its side of the gorilloid's massive neck, drawing nourishment from the bloodstream, receiving sensory impulses, and emitting the motor-nerve commands of a skilled space pilot.

At first the arrangement had looked vampirish to Torrance. But though the ancestors of the helmet beasts might once have been parasites on the ancestors of the gorilloids, they were so no longer. They were symbiotes. They supplied the effective eyes and intellect, while the big animals supplied strength and hands. Neither species was good for much without the other; in combination, they were something rather special. Once he got used to the idea, Torrance found the sight of a helmet beast using its claws to climb up a gorilloid no more unpleasant than a man in a historical stereopic mounting a horse. And once the helmet beasts were used to the idea that not all humans were enemies, they showed a positive affection for them.

Doubtless they're thinking what lovely new specimens we can sell them for their zoo, reflected Torrance. He slapped Barklakh on the shell, patted Jukh's fur, and left the bridge.

A sponge bath of sorts and fresh garments took the edge off his weariness. He thought he'd better warn Van Rijn, and knocked at the cabin which the merchant had curtained off as his own.

"Come in," boomed the bass voice. Torrance entered a cubicle blue with smoke. Van Rijn sat on an empty brandy case, one hand holding a cigar, the other holding Jeri, who was smuggled on his lap.

"Well, sit down, sit down," he roared cordially. "You find a bottle somewhere in all those dirty clothes in the corner."

"I stopped by to tell you, sir, we'll have to receive the captain of our escort when we're in orbit around Freya, which'll be soon. Professional courtesy, you know. He's naturally anxious to meet the Eks . . . uh . . . the Togru-Kon-Tanakh."

"Hokay, pipe him aboard, lad," Van Rijn scowled. "Only make him bring his own bottle, and not take too long. I want to land, me, I'm sick of space. I think I'll run barefoot over the soft cool acres and acres of Freya, by damn!"

"Maybe you'd like to change clothes?" hinted Torrance.

"Ooh!" squeaked Jeri, and ran off to the cabin she sometimes occupied. Van Rijn leaned back against the wall, hitched up his sarong and crossed his shaggy legs as he said: "If that captain comes to meet the Eksers, so let him meet the Eksers.

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I stay comfortable like I am. And I will not entertain him with how I figured out who they were. That I keep exclusive, for sale to what news syndicate bids highest. Understand?"

His eyes grew unsettlingly sharp. Torrance gulped. "Yes, sir."

"Good. Now do sit down, boy. Help me put my story in order. I have not your fine education, I was a poor lonely hard-working old man from I was twelve, so I would need some help making my words as elegant as my logic."

"Logic?" echoed Torrance, puzzled. He tilted the bottle, chiefly because the tobacco haze in here made his eyes smart. "I thought you guessed —"

"What? You know me so little as that? No, no, by damn. Nicholas Van Rijn never guesses. I *knew.*" He reached for the bottle, took a hefty swig, and added magnanimously, "That is, after Yamamura found the gorilloids alone could not be the people we wanted. Then I sat down and uncluttered my brains and thought it all over.

"See, it was simple eliminations. The elephantoid was out right away. Only one of him. Maybe, in emergency, one could pilot this ship through space—but not land it, and pick up wild animals, and care for them, and all else. Also, if somethings go wrong, he is helpless."

Torrance nodded. "I did consider it from the spaceman's angle," he said. "I was inclined to rule out the elephantoid on that ground. But I admit I didn't see the animal-collecting aspect made it altogether impossible that this could be a one-being expedition."

"He was pretty too big anyhow," said Van Rijn. "As for the tiger apes, like you, I never took them serious. Maybe their ancestors was smaller and more biped, but this species is reverting to quadruped again. Animals do not specialize in being everything. Not brains and size and carnivore teeth and cat claws, all to once.

"The caterpiggles looked hokay till I remembered that time you accidental turned on the bestonkered emergency acceleration switch. Unless hooked in place, what such a switch would not be except in special cases, it fell rather easy. So easy that its own weight would make it drop open under three Earth gravities. Or at least there would always be serious danger of this. Also, that shelf you bumped into, they wouldn't build shelves so light on high-gravity planets."

He puffed his cigar back to furnace heat. "Well, so might be the tentacle centaurs," he continued. "Which was bad for us, because hydrogen and oxygen explode. I checked hard through the reports on the ship, hoping I could find something that would eliminate them. And by damn, I did. For this I will give St. Dismas an altar cloth, not too expensive. You see, the Eksers is kind enough to us copper oxide rectifiers, exposed to the air. Copper oxide and hydrogen, at a not very high temperature such as would soon develop from

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strong electricking, they make water and pure copper. Poof, no more rectifier. So therefore ergo, this ship was not designed for hydrogen breathers." He grinned. "You has had so much high scientific education you forgot your freshlyman chemistry."

Torrance snapped his fingers and swore at himself.

"By eliminating, we had the helmet beasts," said Van Rijn. "Only they could not possible be the builders. True, they could handle certain tools and controls, like that buried key; but never all of it. And they are so slow and small. How could they ever stayed alive long enough to invent spaceships? Also, animals that little don't got room for real brains. And neither armored animals nor parasites ever get much. Nor do they get good eyes. And yet the helmet beasts seemed to have very good eyes, as near as we could tell. They looked like human eyes, anyhows.

"I remembered there was both big and little cubbyholes in these cabins. Maybe bunks for two kinds of sleeper? And I thought, is the human brain a turtle just because it is armored in bone? A parasite just because it lives off blood from other places? Well, maybe some people I could name but won't, like Juan Harleman of the Venusian Tea & Coffee Growers, Inc., has parasite turtles for brains. But not me. So there I was. Q.," said Van Rijn smugly, "E.D."

Hoarse from talking, he picked up the bottle. Torrance sat a few minutes more, but as the other seemed disinclined to conversation, he got up to go.

Jeri met him in the doorway. In a slit and topless blue gown which fitted like a coat of lacquer, she was a fourth-order stunblast. Torrance stopped in his tracks. Her gaze slid slowly across him, as if reluctant to depart.

"Mutant sea otter coats," murmured Van Rijn dreamily. "Martian firegems. An apartment in the Stellar Towers."

She scampered to him and ran her fingers through his hair. "Are you comfortable, Nicky?" she purred. "Can't I do something for you?"

Van Rijn winked at Torrance. "Your technique, that time on the bridge, I watched and it was lousy," he said. "Also, you are not old and fat and lonesome; you have a happy family for yourself."

"Uh, yes," said Torrance. "I do." He let the curtain drop and returned to the bridge.

THE END

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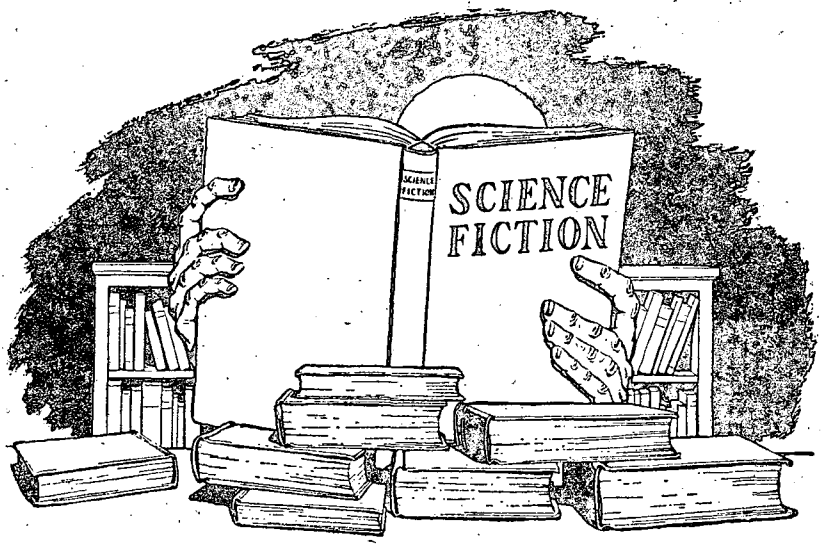

BY P. SCHUYLER MILLER

TOMORROWS

IT APPEARS that American newspapers are not the only ones to offer their readers periodic views of the world of tomorrow, as seen by scientists of note. The Soviet youth journal, *Komsomolskaya Pravda,* assigned two of its reporters, Sergei Gouschev and the same Mikhail Vassiliev whose "Sputnik into Space" we have already seen here, to interview twenty-nine top Russian scientists and engineers and get their predictions of the technological world of the 21st century. McGraw-Hill is publishing the American edition of their book as "Russian Science in the 21st Century"—222 pp.; $4.50.

The translation is again an English one—English and Canadian editions have already appeared—and I'd say it is again by academic people who don't understand science of scientific terms. The confusion isn't compounded as it was in Vassiliev's "Sputnik," but the jargon does get

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dense in spots and rather hard to plow through.

As a matter of fact, the entire book sounds like something halfway between an *American Weekly* revelation of about thirty years ago, and one of Hugo Gernsback's features in *Science and Invention* for the same period. I invoke Gernsback because he did know science and his authorities knew what they were talking about; I call on Hearst's Sunday supplement because this book has the same knack of making the ordinary sound stupendous.

This is, I suspect, because the book —or series of articles, which apparently was its first form—is aimed at a public who, in spite of their youth, have a lower level of scientific sophistication than ours of today. This is not to say that Soviet science is where ours was in the 1930s; it does mean that Russian scientific journalism, and presumably public understanding, is at about that level. As a result, an American reader is likely to find many or most of the engineering and chemical marvels old stuff. This will not be true of the biological predictions.

The propaganda level of the book is relatively low. Lenin and Mendeleev are invoked from time to time by most of the experts interviewed, simply because they both—Mendeleev as a chemist, Lenin as a social theorist—understood how science can shape the world. In most places ample credit is given to non-Soviet scientists. And if some of the schemes discussed seem to call for a world under one administration, it may be that the speakers are thinking of international co-operation rather than worldwide Communism for the year 2000.

By and large, this is a pragmatic world that we're shown. There is little development for its own sake; what is predicted fits into a picture of planned society and economy spread from the Pacific coast of Siberia and Red China across Asia and Europe to the undefined boundaries of the western People's Republics. For example, where American engineers might be talking of a national network of nuclear power plants, the Russians are predicting the more practical full utilization of water power, underground gasification of coal in place of mining, and direct conversion of chemical into electrical energy—all this feeding into a gigantic high-frequency transmission network extending clear across the face of the Eastern Hemisphere.

The emphasis on high-frequency technology is especially interesting; it crops up in several chapters, from different sources, and I presume it means that advanced work in the field is well under way. Blasts of high-frequency energy are seen drilling tunnels through the Himalayas, as automatic mining machines carry a network of powered highways across the face of Asia. Fuelless automobiles travel these roads, powered by induction from high-frequency cables laid under or beside them. Needless to say, such vehicles will be able to go only where the power

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lines have been laid, and they can be immobilized from a master switch.

Most interesting, though, is the emphasis on biology as the shaping force for the future. This, we are told, is something the two reporters did not expect when they started their interviews; it grew on them, and eventually took up a major part of their book. The Soviet biologists speak confidently of shaping and perfecting plants, animals, and men —of intensifying mental powers as well as resistance to disease—of finding a chemical substitute for sleep. In the surgical field, we are shown an experimental diagnostic computer—a supersonic device for crumbling resistant kidney stones in the body—bloodless surgery with a supersonic scalpel. Climate control is seen as a means of helping biology open the world's desert regions to agriculture, and make farming possible in the arctic.

One of the almost untouched sources of food and wealth is the sea, and an old friend, Arthur C. Clarke, has enlarged on this theme in a new book for young people, "The Challenge of the Sea"—Holt, Rinehart & Winston; 167 pp.; $3.95. The rocketeer turned skin-diver tells the story of marine research, some of the deep-sea mysteries it has solved and others it has revealed, and the potential harvest of the deep. Excellent illustrations by Alex Schomburg help make his points clear—though krill are not sardines, and sperm whales don't feed on 'em. Here you'll find a good deal of the fascination that the author put into his novel, "The Deep Range."

The biological future is also the theme of two small books—104 and 128 pages, respectively—published by Basic Books for $3.00. They are part of an excellent series on science and philosophy. The older and more daring of the two is by the French experimental biologist, Jean Rostand, and is entitled "Can Man Be Modified?" The newer and more conservative is by P. B. Medawar, the British winner of the Nobel Prize in medicine. It's title: "The Future of Man." It is a series of six lectures given for the British Broadcasting Company in 1959.

What Medawar does is spell out what we know about human heredity that may—when we understand more —enable us to predict the future of humanity. He also makes clear that he is not talking about individual men, but about mankind—the race, or significant portions of it. He points to the flaws in schemes for selectively breeding a race of supermen, common in both fiction and social planning of the Nazi type. Most important, of course, is that it destroys the innate variability in the human animal that has made it possible for us to adapt to a great variety of conditions.

Professor Medawar also makes clear that human society is subject to evolution, and it is this aspect of mankind—his malleable, alterable social organization—that will make it possible to surmount purely physi-

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cal and biological limitations. This in turn derives from the unique nature of the human brain, an organ whose responses can be conditioned and instructed, where the rest of the body is limited to a choice of built-in reactions.

Dr. Rostand, on the other hand, is talking about man as an individual, whose hereditary make-up and physical potential can be modified biologically and chemically in the sense that Aldous Huxley and others have suggested in fiction. This is the type of work in which he is himself engaged, and he is well aware of the fictional literature as well as of the scientific. He is closer to the mood of the Soviet biologists with their suggestions of altered individuals who can do without sleep, resist disease, and behave as supermen.

Both men—and the Russians—subscribe to Rostand's philosophy: "Man must aim at surpassing himself, at drawing from himself something better than himself." Dr. Medawar seems to be saying that this will be done slowly, through manipulation of social forces that affect the entire human race or large parts of it. Dr. Rostand and his Soviet colleagues see it done with a needle, under a microscope, changing the structure of the cells from which supermen will be born, physically and chemically altering the heredity of the race.

* * * * *

One page in Rostand's book, by the way, carries a quest of mine one step farther back in time. As I've said, he is well aware of the suggestions of science-fiction writers, and among his examples is "The Future Eve," by Villiers de l'Isle-Adam—whose synthetic heroine was named Androïde. This carries the first use of "android" to designate a biologically created robot well back beyond the science fiction of our time. How much farther will someone take it?

THE YEAR'S BEST SF, edited by Judith Merril. Simon and Schuster, New York. 1960. 320 pp. $3.95

Just about the best news at the Pittsburgh convention—next perhaps, to Robert Heinlein's near-miraculous appearance—was the word that Judith Merril's annual anthologies, nurtured until now by Dell First Editions, have been taken over by one of the world's top publishers. With all gratitude to Dell, S&S can give the books the promotion they richly deserve. They have also, I trust, done themselves some good in the process, for their few SF titles between Williamson's "Humanoids" and "The Worlds of Clifford Simak" were less than outstanding.

There is an ugly rumor afoot that every spring the year's best science fiction writers—a different lot each year—get together in the little town in northeastern Pennsylvania where Judith Merril, Damon Knight, James Blish and other bright lights of the field already live, and write the next year's "Best." The argument is that only this kind of intensive commit-

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tee action could produce such a distinguished lot of yarns; the counter-argument is that only distinct individuals could write them, and only a highly individual editor select them.

This fifth collection is right up there with the first two or three, and well in advance of last year's. As usual, only the librarians are likely to take the title seriously: Judith Merril can always be counted on for a balanced collection of good stories, exploring the scope of a very broad field, which make up an eminently readable book. In any year, strict adherence to a set of rigid literary or thematic criteria may produce a book of monotonous excellence—and monotonous is something no Merril anthology ever is. She ranges too far, nets the waters too thoroughly, and comments too pungently on what she has caught for that to happen.

In this collection, stretching from late 1958 into the beginning of 1960, we have eighteen stories, one editorial from this magazine, one newspaper story, and two bits of light verse. Analog is represented twice, by John Campbell's editorial, "What Do You Mean . . . Human?," which ranges around the title in fine, fervid Campbellian paradogic —my term for paradoxical logic— and by Darrel T. Langart's "What the Left Hand Was Doing," a nice little hybrid of psi and spy in which a scientist is to be rescued from Red China.

Damon Knight's "The Handler," from *Rogue*, opens the book. It's a beautifully wry variant on an old theme that I can hardly spell out. From the *Saturday Evening Post* and Jack Finney come "The Other Wife," one of the writer's twists on alternative lives inaccessible dimensions. Then it's Avram Davidson and *Playboy* for "No Fire Burns," which cuts into—and I might have said, cuts out—the heart of psychological testing and the ways it is used. We get into the mainline SF magazines with Cordwainer Smith's "No, No, Not Rogov!" from *If*; it is a strange tale of the Soviet scientist who developed a thought-reading machine that reached farther than he dreamed.

If you deny the possibility of mermaids, Ray Bradbury's "The Shoreline at Sunset" is fantasy, for in it two men and a boy find a mermaid on the Mexican sands. Because it's present-day Bradbury, however, the story is really about what such a marvel can do to men's personalities

Humor can be in handling, as it is in Gordon Dickson's slight psi-yarn-with-twist, "The Dreamsman," from *Star No. 6*, or in gags, as in "Multum in Parvo," five snatches of willful anachronism by Jack Sharkey, from *Gent.* Then, boom!, you're plunged into the experience of Daniel Keyes' "Hugo" winner, "Flowers for Algernon," in which this new author deftly traces the growth and decay of a mentally stimulated moron. And then into John Campbell's thought-stimulating editorial; and then to an Associated Press story from the *New York Times* which brings us down hard on the reality of the robots in our midst—Ralph Dighton's account

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of "Sierra Sam," the pseudoman enough like you and me to stand in for us in vicious equipment tests.

Sentiment is out of fashion among the *avant gard* of literature; it's middle-class, non-U, anything but out there. But sentiment is a big part in the lives of most people, and it is beautifully handled, as ever, by Clifford Simak in "A Death in the House" from *Galaxy*. Here one of his lonely farmers finds a lost monster, tries to help it, buries it when it dies, then finds that his sacrifice is only beginning. Sentiment, of a very different kind, is at the heart of Fritz Leiber's "Mariana" from *Fantastic*, in which a world created to maintain an illusion comes crumbling down, bit by bitter bit.

A nibble of satire from *Monocle*: Roger Price's "Inquiry Concerning the Curvature of the Earth's Surface and Divers Investigations of a Metaphysical Nature." A poignant post-atomic-war story quite as good as Miss Merril's own: "Day at the Beach," by Carol Emshwiller, from *Fantasy & Science Fiction* . . . followed immediately by Randy Garrett, somersaulting in with six outrageous lines of verse to take the edge off. Then the Langart psi adventure; then, from the British *Science Fantasy*, "The Sound Sweep," by J. G. Ballard. This is a fantasy which, as Miss Merril points out, meets Fletcher Pratt's criterion of emotional and psychological integrity while it violates scientific plausibility.

Will Worthington, another new writer, is represented by "Plenitude" from *F&SF*, a story of a family of conservative country folk living off the land in a future where civilized men have become less than human. Then, from the same source, Theodore Sturgeon's "The Man Who Lost the Sea"—a story which has been selected by Martha Foley and Whit Burnett as one of the "Best American Short Stories of 1960." This, incidentally, is an honor that Miss Merril has also won. As might be expected, it is a story that goes deep into a man's confused mind.

To change pace at a needed moment, Miss Merril next throws in a bit from *Original Science Fiction*, "Make a Prison," light and puzzling. Then Mark Clifton, in "What Now, Little Man?", offers another puzzle—a problem story of man and his relations with the races he will find among the stars. And then another of those little, deft verses from *F&SF*, Hilbert Schenck, Jr.'s "Me." And that's it, except for an even more thoughtful summary of the year than we usually get, and the "Honorable Mention" list that is really all the science fiction anyone needs to read in a year.

There'll be a paperback, but the Merril anthologies are the ones you buy to keep.

MOUNT ANALOGUE, by René Daumal. Pantheon Books, New York. 1960. 157 pp. $3.00

This note is primarily for information: because of the title, and be-

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cause the lengthy introduction, describing the author's niche in French literature, calls it "an adventure tale bordering on science fiction." Daumal himself said he was trying to do for metaphysics what Jules Verne did for physics.

The book is unfinished; several pages of notes at the end suggest what the author intended to do, but not really what esoteric, symbolic significance he intended to derive from his account of an expedition of queerly assorted intellectuals, who intend to climb the highest mountain on Earth—a mountain enveloped in a kind of geometric or space-time warp, so that it is normally invisible, and that has its own strange flora and fauna, its own geology, and presumably its own metaphysics. It is a little more intelligible than such surrealistics fantasies as Coates' "Eater of Darkness," but the symbolism is buried layers deep on every page, nothing is what it seems to be, and with the book unfinished, nothing is ever clarified.

EIGHT KEYS TO EDEN, by Mark Clifton. Doubleday & Co., Garden City, N. Y. 1960. 187 pp. $2.95

This original novel achieves the unenviable distinction of typifying the best and the worst of what is generally considered "standard" ASF-brand science fiction.

It begins by showing us a future galactic civilization built around a philosophical concept—"E" for Extrapolation—which the author makes as comprehensible as A. E. van Vogt made its prototype, "Null A" or general semantics, magically incomprehensible. To solve social and scientific problems on a galactic scale, Mankind has had to find and breed a class of supermen, the Extrapolators, who cut completely loose from orthodoxy, question every fact and hypothesis, come at problems from impossible angles, and discover "impossible" relationships. Beneath their level, the galactic society has grown just as bureaucratically fogbound and riven with jurisdictional jealousy as the originators of "E" had foreseen.

As the story opens, the advance guard on the planet Eden has failed to report in. A Junior E, Calvin Gray, is sent to find out what is wrong and straighten things out. A politician seizes the opportunity to strike at the immunities of the whole E class. And the problem of Eden itself is no simple one—every human artifact has vanished into nothing, leaving the frightened colonists stark naked, unable to build fires or pin leaves together or build huts. And no sooner has Cal Gray landed than his ship, his clothes, and every other trace of his civilization also vanishes.

So far, so very good—but now the story shifts purpose and goes all psi, not very successfully. Instead of reasoning his way out of the trap he is in, Cal is handed the solution as a preamble to being given super-psi powers which, of course, open the universe wide to Man. I don't say that all this couldn't have been made convincing; I just say that it isn't—

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that everything comes too easily, and that the supreme secret of the mentalist race might just as well have been given to religiously cracked Louie or earthy Jed Dawkins as to Cal Gray, except that he has been labeled an E, and hence worthy of getting the prize. In fact, I'd have liked to see him, with only his E training, confronted with ordinary people who had suddenly acquired the supra-E powers of vibrational control.

I must also reluctantly admit that any geologist would have smelled a whole planet-full of mice if the crystalline structure on Crystal Palace Mountain is as it is described. Quartz takes some beautiful forms, but nothing as bizarre as the arches and other unnatural structures that we're shown.

THE UNEXPECTED DIMENSION, by Algis Budrys. Ballantine Books, New York. No. 388K. 1960. 159 pp. 35¢

This book is in itself an adequate answer to the claim that science fiction died in 1946. All of the stories in it have been published since 1954—three of them here in ASF—and they are as good as anything we have had in a long time. What's more, they achieve their excellence by combining good writing with good story-telling that should get through to any reader with an imagination.

There are seven stories in the collection, all good. In most of them the author shows a gift for portraying a subtly perverted society—by our standards—in which a believably complex person is torn between conformity and rationality.

The opening story, "The End of Summer," was here in 1954. We are shown a world of immortals which has endured for almost ten thousand years, where old men are always old men and boys are frozen as boys, with recorded memories hung about their necks like the Ancient Mariner's albatross. Dilettante Kester Fay carelessly kills a boy's dog, and this frozen society begins to come apart in his mind.

"The Distant Sound of Engines" is an ironic bit from last year's *F&SF*. A truck driver, his legs lopped off in a crash, finds himself in bed beside a horribly wounded someone from far in space, who in the night whispers to him the secrets of space and time. But Lenny has developed a counterman's special kind of memory . . .

"Never Meet Again"—*Infinity*, 1957—is perhaps the least of the lot, and the most gimmicked. Doctor Professor Kempfer flees from a world in which the Nazis won, into the alternate world of our own time—to find it bitterly the same. "The Burning World"—same place, same year—is the longest of the seven. again a future world brought into stasis, but unable to keep its balance. Here the personalities of the characters are all-important, as in any mature fiction.

"First to Serve," also here in ASF in 1954, is a varient on the too-

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human robot theme. Its value is in its ironic view of human motivation. "Go and Behold Them," from a 1958 *Venture*, is a completely strange and beautiful story about a terrible world. But the best of them all is the last, "The Executioner," published here in 1955, with its grimly perverted picture of justice in a viciously stratified society. Perhaps the end is a little too pulpily pat, but I choose to think that what Chief Justice Samson Joyce of Sovereign New York does then is the result of a mental breakdown in the face of a solutionless dilemma, rather than an about-face in social values.

Nobody killed science fiction.

THE SIOUX SPACEMAN, by Andre Norton; AND THEN THE TOWN TOOK OFF, by Richard Wilson. Ace Books, New York. No. D-437. 1960. 133 + 123 pp. 35¢

Again Ace gives us a completely new interplanetary adventure story by Andre Norton, and for good measure a reprint of Richard Wilson's "And Then the Town Took Off," a spoof that is as much fun as it was in its magazine version.

For reasons hard for me to fathom, the cover illustration for the Norton story has absolutely nothing to do with the story itself. The hero is a Sioux Indian, Kade Whitehawk—so he's shown as white. He is on Klor openly, as a trader—so he's shown in a hawk-mask, like some "Phantom" of space. The slave race of the story, the Ikkinni, are black-furred ET's with a crest like a gorilla's and a Roman nose—so they are shown as disconsolate humans in black shorts, chained together by the neck. Their slave collars, *not* chained together, are torture devices activated by a control box in the hands of an overseer for the Styor, masters of a large chunk of the galaxy—so it's Cade who has the box in the picture. There's a good story yet to be written around that cover.

My bilious griping aside, this isn't one of Miss Norton's very best action yarns but it's better than most and has a neat and valid ethnological gimmick. The human traders, though they can do nothing overtly, are surreptitiously undermining the Styor's strength on Klor. Cade Whitehawk picks up where a Sioux predecessor left off, and realizes that by introducing horses to Klor and letting them run wild, he can help the Ikkinni to become a race of horsemen like his own ancestors, and can give them their one chance to win independence of the Styor. Of course there's plenty of good, forthright action along the way. The relationships between men and animals are among the highlights of all Miss Norton's books, and here the horses momentarily come as alive as the people.

Richard Wilson's yarn isn't quite as much fun as his "Girls From Planet 5"—but what is? Here the completely screwy town of Superior, Ohio, home of the even screwier Cavalier Institute of Applied Sciences and of a bubble-gum factory, simply takes to the air, carrying with it a passing

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train. Aboard are a Pentagon courier, Sergeant Don Cort, the red-headed secretary of an airminded United States Senator, and assorted other characters; in town is a character to match every one of 'em. Underground—so to speak in the roots of Superior—there is also a posse of superintelligent extraterrestrial kangaroos, the Gizl, who are responsible for most of the slapstick monkeyshines. And so bad goes to worse, as well it might, with the turns of the plot far less predictable than the outcome.

WORLD OF THE MASTERMINDS, by Robert Williams. TO THE END OF TIME, by Robert Moore Williams. Ace Books, New York. No. D-427. 1960. 149 + 108 pp. 35¢

A longish novel, source unspecified—I'll learn it from some reader too late to tell you—and five short stories from as many magazines make up this all-Williams book. It is practically all formula-action stuff of ten years ago, more professionally handled in 1950 than it was in 1930.

The novel deals with a power-struggle on Pluto—a much too salubrious Pluto—between two men who are trying to track down a master race from the stars, which they suspect is meddling in human affairs, and the minions of a plutocrat—no pun intended—who wants the powers of the Masterminds to give him dominion over the Solar System. There's all kinds of fast action and a little mystery, but the identity of the real "Masterminds" is not much in doubt once they appear on the scenes.

Of the shorts, the title and cover story was in *Super Science* in 1950. It has one nice conceit: a Venusian race that *sings* people through time. Number Two, "Where Tall Towers Gleam," is a corny little fantasy about a boy's daydreams, from a 1952 *Fantastic Adventures*. It's my favorite of the lot. "Homeward Bound" is purely a gag story—*Startling*, 1950—about the man who won't believe there are Martians on Earth.

"When the Spoilers Came" is from *Planet Stories* in 1952—the one about the man who protects the Martians from exploitation, more believable and better done than when I, among others, did it twenty years before. Finally, "Like Alarm Bells Ringing" from a 1947 *Amazing* wasn't new then, either: this time the super race discovers us humans diligently plugging our way toward holocaust or immortality.

Probably all these themes would be novel and exciting to a brand-new reader. Trouble is, the novelty and excitement vanishes after he has read them eight times in five magazines within six months.

THE WORLDS OF CLIFFORD SIMAK, Simon and Schuster, New York. 1960. 378 pp. $3.75

Simon and Schuster, after a good deal of time-marking, have hit another winner in this collection of twelve stories by one of the most

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competent writers in the field. Two of the stories, including "The Big Front Yard"—Hugo winner for best novelette of 1958—were first published here; the other was "Neighbor," in 1954. One came from *Infinity;* the rest are from *Galaxy.*

Looking at these stories together, it is easy to see why Kingsley Amis, in his "New Maps of Hell," characterized Clifford Simak as "science-fiction poet laureate of the countryside." Indeed, he labels the nostalgia for a rural life, which he finds to be an important theme in American—but not British—science fiction, "the Simak syndrome." Well, the author, a Minneapolis newspaperman, lives in some of the most beautiful countryside in the world and has every right to be its laureate, though I've pointed out that this is a legitimate American attitude and not his exclusive possession. Amis might, reading this collection, have spotted a more truly Simakian theme: that extraterrestrials are friendly people at heart, and we can do business with them. Sentimental this approach may be; mawkish it never is. And its people—bug-eyed or not—are folks you'd like to meet, unless you're a beatnik-type aesthete.

To start with home products, "Big Front Yard" is king of the trading yarns by virtue of its award and the loving detail of the strange world that critters from somewhere create outside Hiram Taine's front door. With the help of his dog and the local handyman he builds this accident into a galactic good-will mission. Still, with all it offers, I prefer the opener, "Dusty Zebra," in which a small boy and a couple of over-zealous adults create a trading chaos. And, in an entirely different vein, trading of a kind is at the heart of "Jackpot," in which a shipload of sharp operators try to find a way to take full advantage of a treasure they find on a nondescript planet of a nothing star.

As for the friendly ET's, they don't always trade. I can't say what they are after in "Honorable Opponent," a thoroughly switched space-war story—though I am afraid the gimmick is telegraphed. In "Carbon Copy" an interstellar aid program backfires hilariously; in "Operation Stinky" a not-quite-skunk from a flying saucer drives the Army nuts by do-gooding in a heavy-handed sort of way; in "Green Thumb" a small-town man befriends a walking plant and is somewhat embarrassed by the results; and in "Neighbor," also first published here, another stranger from the stars fits quietly into the rural setting and makes a place for himself and his family.

What else? Well, Clifford Simak does have other strings to his bow. "Founding Father" is a gently bitter commentary on the subterfuges men must adopt to live alone on far worlds. "Idiot's Crusade" shows suddenly granted mental power as a coin spinning on edge, good and evil alternating dizzyingly. "Death Scene" is the simplest, shortest and subtlest of them all—just an old man dying quietly by the rules. And then, for

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complete contrast, we have "Lulu"—the love-sick, starry-eyed robot spaceship who must have been the inspiration for the recent "Fearless Fosdick" sequence in Al Capp's "Li'l Abner".

This is a collection that you can recommend to anyone. I hope every library in the country gets several and lets it wear out in circulation. And I hope Simon and Schuster—who are taking over Judith Merril's superb annual anthologies—has found an editor who will pick more books as good.

REPRISE

LOOKING BACKWARD, by Edward Bellamy. Signet Classics No. CD-26. 1960. 222 pp. 50¢

This is America's classic Utopian novel, whose hero was looking backward from the year 2000 to 1887, when it was written. You may no longer find it readable, but you may be interested in the special introduction by Erich Fromm, which helps explain the tremendous influence the book had—far greater, certainly than any other that is technically science fiction.

AGAINST THE FALL OF NIGHT, by Arthur C. Clarke. Pyramid Books No. G-554. 1960. 159 pp. 35¢

Here is an oddity: a paperback edition of the original Gnome Press version of Clarke's great poetic novel of the far future, which he later rewrote as "The City and the Stars."

THE FOURTH GALAXY READER, edited by H. L. Gold. Perma Books No. M-4184. 1960. 239 pp. 35¢

The Doubleday edition was out in 1959; the stories date from 1956 and 1957.

THE TIME TRADERS, by Andre Norton. Ace Books No. D-461. 1960. 191 pp. 35¢

Ace, which has published several Norton originals, very properly recognizes that there is nothing childish about her "juvenile" novels of space-and-time adventure. If literary snobbishness kept you from getting the World edition in 1958, there's no stigma on it now. Time travel to Bronze Age Europe . . . a race of galactic marauders . . . shipwreck in the distant past: this yarn has everything!

SENTINELS OF SPACE, by Eric Frank Russell. Ace Books No. D-468. 1960. 179 pp. 35¢

This is a second printing, with a new number, of the popular superman story by one of England's recently inactive masters of fantastic adventure.

THE GREATEST ADVENTURE, by John Taine. Ace Books No. D-473. 1960. 256 pp. 35¢

Although the original novel came out in 1929, it remains one of "John Taine's"—Professor Eric T. Bell's—best. Strange dinosaurlike creatures turn up in the antarctic, but are far from what they seem.

THE END

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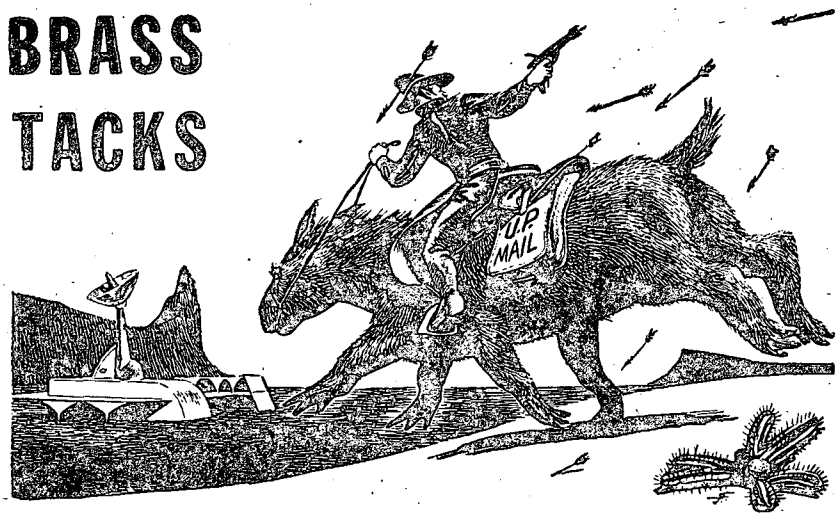
BRASS TACKS



Dear John:

The article, "The Electric Field Rocket," by Dr. H. C. Dudley in the November 1960 issue was of extreme interest to us. This is, to our knowledge, the first use of model rockets for experiments in physics.

In the October 1960 issue of our NAR newsletter, "The Model Rocketeer," we have requested that NAR members all over the country repeat Dudley's experiments and report their findings.

Three different NAR groups have been specifically requested to perform the experiments on their instrumented model rocket ranges. Two of the groups are in Colorado—Denver and Colorado Springs—at 5000-foot altitudes in a very dry climate. The other group is in the Long Island area. These groups have accurate optical methods of determining peak altitudes of model rockets and means to record weather factors as well. All groups will follow the instructions detailed by Dr. Dudley in his article.

All data will be collected at NAR Headquarters in New York City. It will be evaluated to determine validity. We will then forward to you and Dr. Dudley copies of this data.—G. Harry Stine, President & Trustee, National Association of Rocketry, Suite 1962, 11 W. 42nd St., New York 36, N. Y.

Competent amateur research and checking is exactly what's needed. We'll run reports when available.

Dear Mr. Campbell:

I write you more in sorrow than in anger. The article "The Electric Field

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Rocket" in the November issue is perfectly ridiculous. I would consider it a spoof or joke, but can't find anything funny in it, so I must assume it was meant seriously.

Dr. Dudley states that his "charged" rocket rises four hundred per cent farther—presumably five times as far. The total rise is proportional to the total thrust, assuming the firing time is constant, and the total net thrust is the thrust of the engine minus gravity. Since "charging" the rocket doesn't change the engine, it must reduce the gravitational attraction, and a brief calculation indicates that it reduces it considerably. It therefore follows that it should be possible to weigh a plastic rocket, paint it with aluminum paint, reweigh it and find it weighs substantially less the second time. This I do not believe.

This leaves us with three other possibilities. One is that the aluminum is reducing drag or air friction. My neighbor, an aeronautical engineer, considers this highly unlikely. The other two are that there is an unknown effect or that the experiment is phony. I am not inclined to choose between these.

Regarding the latter part of this article, freshman physics teaches that whilst the electrons—which are presumably real—move from—to + the current—which is a formal concept with no physical reality—moves from + to —. This is not as silly as it sounds since in chemical cells, with which I am mainly concerned, there may be positive ions moving in one direction, negative ions moving in the other or both moving in opposite directions, and the current still flows + to —.

I cannot for the life of me see how a man who knows enough physics to be a radio bug could pass this article. Your science articles have a high reputation, but this is a low ebb.

If it was a joke, my apologies, and I am deficient in the sense of humor. —S. W. Bowne, 2615 N. Fountain, Wichita, Kansas.

The essence of Science is Experiment —NOT theory! The article reports an experiment, one readily subject to test. The fact that "it makes nonsense" theoretically—and I fully agree that it is theoretically nonsense!—has no bearing whatever. Remember that, theoretically a bumble-bee can't fly, and that it was shown, theoretically, that Edison's electric light system could not be practical because no electric generator could be more than fifty per cent efficient!

The way we get better theories is by doing something theoretically impossible—and then getting a new theory!

Dear Mr. Campbell:

As you know, we at Edmund advertise in Analog and have for some time. Being an old science-fiction enthusiast, personally, I tried to latch on to our checking copies each month and read them—as a science

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fiction enthusiast rather than an Advertising Manager. However, I was very interested to read in the October 1960 issue your Science Fact article on the self-repairing robot and discover that in essence it covered crystal growing and that you mention Cenco Scientific as a possible source of crystals for your readers, mentioning, however, that they did not sell to individuals.

I hasten now to bring to your attention that Edmund Scientific Co. does sell to individuals and that we have put together a crystal growing kit, our No. 70, 336, which sells for $9.50 postpaid. With it you can do a crystallography project. We include in it the book that you recommend, "Crystals and Crystal Growing," plus the chemicals you need to grow display crystals of potassium aluminum sulfate, potassium chromium sulfate, potassium sodium tartrate, nickel sulfate hexahydrate, et cetera.

Incidentally, we have developed a complete line of science project kits that run from lens and optic kits to crystal-growing kits, solar energy, spectroscopy and even soil testing, basically designed for the Science Fair enthusiasts but which might be of interest to your readers.

May I hear from you?—W. J. McCann, Advertising Manager, Edmund Scientific Co., 101 E. Gloucester Pike, Barrington New Jersey.

Edmund Scientific can supply some of the materials in kit form—which is a big help getting started. However, it is a kit and, if you want some of your own original oddball substances to work with—well, Edmund is not a chemical supply house.

Dear Mr. Campbell:

As a long-time reader of ASF, I wish to congratulate you on the quality and readability that you have long sustained in your publication. Your "fact" articles have proved to be very interesting indeed, and a valuable adjunct to the fiction. In fact, I was enjoying your latest on crystallography—October, 1960—when I tripped over what seemed to be a minor error in your account of the ethylene diamine tartrate crystal program at Western Electric.

In your account, "mutant" crystal forms took over, forcing the EDT crystal program to an end.

According to another account, a three-day investigation of the new crystals showed them to be a monohydrate form of the desired EDT crystals, but also proved that this form should always tend to appear under the conditions that happened to exist. It seems that the temperature at which the crystal-growing solutions were maintained favored the monohydrate form over the desired form. The monohydrate was slightly less soluble than the desired form at the temperature provided, hence, tended to crystallize more readily. Any speck of dust or previously-existing monohydrate crystal could trigger the undesired form.

The researchers predicted that by

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raising the temperature four degrees, the desirable EDT crystals should be favored. When the temperature of the Western Electric solutions were raised four degrees, sure enough, the EDT crystals "fed" on the monohydrate crystals; that is, the precarious equilibrium between the two forms was tipped in favor of the desired crystals. The EDT crystals resumed their growth, while the monohydrate crystals slowly dissolved in the supersaturated EDT solution.

Far from *wrecking* the EDT crystal program, the newly-discovered monohydrate crystal form actually helped it. Monohydrate crystals proved far superior for replenishing the crystal baths. Since the monohydrate crystals were less stable than the anhydrous form at the new, higher growing temperatures, it provided less chance of starting spurious crystal growth, than if the previous EDT salt were used. In addition, crystal-growing solutions fed with the monohydrate crystals could be used longer before it became necessary to remove accumulated impurities from the solution.—Albin R. Meier, 2413 Alvin Street, Mountain View, California

Thanks for the additional information on EDT crystals. I knew of the "mutant" monohydrate crystals, and knew they had switched to growing quartz—superior to EDT for their use anyway—at about that time. I understood the monohydrate forced them to make the change.

Evidently the anhydrate and monohydrate of EDT act like the hexahydrate and heptohydrate of $NiSO_4$—both can be grown simultaneously at one exact temperature.

Dear Mr. Campbell:

Having just read Mr. Reynolds' propaganda article-story, "Combat," in the latest issue of *Analog*, I feel that your readers are entitled to hear an opposing view on the issue of the United States-Soviet race—a view that makes clear that the issue is not as cut and dried as Mr. Reynolds—despite his obviously great knowledge of the Soviet Union—seems to think. The following is an excerpt from the March 1960 *FORTUNE*, p. 87-92, which is in turn an excerpt from the introduction to Colin Clark's book, "The Real Productivity of Soviet Russia." Mr. Clark is, according to *FORTUNE*, a "distinguished British economist of Oxford University, and research director of the Econometrica Institute."

He writes: "A child recovering from a serious illness shows, for two succeeding weeks, a rapid gain in weight. The doctor plots these figures on a logarithmic diagram and deduces the conclusion, which he tells to the parents, that in a little over a year the child is going to weight more than its father. If any doctor acted in this manner, he would be regarded as not qualified to practice. Yet economists go on making the same mistake . . .

"It should be a commonplace of

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economics—though many prominent economists have in fact failed to see it—that when a country is recovering from war, invasion, and similar disasters, which have reduced its productivity to a low level, there will be a recovery period in which growth is rapid, followed by a period of gradually decelerating growth as productivity approaches that position on its normal trend line which it might have been expected to reach had the war not occurred. This is exactly what has been observed in Germany, Japan, and Italy—countries which suffered devastation comparable with that in Soviet Russia. . . .

"The results obtained by long and careful analysis of Soviet productivity can all be (summarized as follows): The information for the years after 1953 shows in actuality the rate of growth slowing down, as had been predicted . . . . Over the whole period 1913 to 1956 the long-period rate of growth averaged 1.2 per cent per year . . .

"These figures should be compared with the rate of growth of real product per man-hour found in the United States and other free market countries. Subject only to minor fluctuations, the United States, ever since the 1890s, has maintained a steady rate of growth of real product per man-hour of 2.3 per cent per year . . .

"These conclusions about the comparatively low long-period rate of economic growth in the Soviet Union . . . are fully confirmed, however, by some very thorough researches into the trend of man-year and man-hour productivity in Soviet manufacturing industries carried out by Professor Nutter, of the University of Virginia, for the National Bureau of Economic Research, New York. Some extracts from these results have appeared in *American Economic Review,* 1957-58. . . .

"Governed by fanatical materialists, the Russian people have been called upon to sacrifice their personal liberties, their national traditions, and their religion for the sake of material progress; and all that they have received in return is a rate of material progress far below that of most other countires. The poor and uninformed peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America are persistently being told . . . that Communism, while it may have certain drawbacks, is nevertheless the key to material advancement. It should be made clear how very mediocre the economic results of Communism have, in fact, been. . . .

"Nor can it be contended that, while free-market economics may represent the best system for comparatively advanced countries, poorer countries 'need Communsim' in order to get them started from an economic level at, the end of the nineteenth century, far lower than that of Russia, and with a predominantly free-market economy has been able to obtain a far higher rate of economic growth . . ."

I could quote quite a bit more—I'm tempted to quote the whole article. However, I think Mr. Clark's

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conclusions should be taken with a little salt, since *FORTUNE* published the article, apparently, to oppose suggestions for increasing United States taxes and using the revenue to speed up the United States economic growth rate. The suggestion is that, if we're patient, and wait a few more years, we will win the economic race with Russia without any special efforts at all.

Of course no argument can deny the remarkable space technological feats that the Russians have performed. Quite possible their scientific progress is relatively independent of *overall* economic growth. In the years of 1959 and 1960, for example, when great successes have been achieved in the Russian satellite program, agricultural productivity has been significantly below that of 1958 in the Soviet Union.

Despite my doubts about Mr. Reynolds' extrapolations, I enjoyed his article-story, and hope it draws comments from other readers as well—Ernest Schlesinger, 2486 Shattuck, Berkeley 4, California.

Mr. Clark's article represents the always-pleasant-to-listen-to proposition "We don't have to do a thing—we're sure to win!" It makes the gross error of comparing countries already highly industrialized—Germany, Japan—with a previously undeveloped nation. Russia's growth is not mere recovery-from-injury, any more than China is "merely recovering from the confusions of wartime."

Dear Mr. Campbell:

In reading over some back issues of Astounding, I came across what I believe was your first editorial on the Land color process. In that article you expressed an opinion that the color television system now extant is doomed because of the Land process. Perhaps you would be interested in the following information.

The R.C.A. color system is a three-color system. It utilizes, essentially, three colored filters in front of three separate camera tubes. The relative gains are adjusted until the output from each tube is the same when the camera is shooting a reference white area *under the light to be used for the colorcast.* This latter condition eliminates the problem that tungstens are not the same color as sunlight.

Now. You have three signals for one picture. How do you transmit them? Because of the requirement of compatibility, one of these components had to look to a b-w receiver like the signal of a black and white camera shooting the color scene.

The final solution was this. For the black and white component, a combination of the R, G, and B cameras was made as follows.

1W equals 0.30R + 0.59G + 0.11B.

(The relative components are not equal because the eye is most sensitive to green, less to red, and least sensitive to blue by approximately the ratio expressed in this equation. It is to be understood that R, G, and B are the color standard triad used by the R.C.A. process.)

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Besides this W or black and white component, an I and Q component are obtained by matrixing according to the following equations.

$$I = -0.28G + 0.59R - 0.32B$$
$$Q = -0.52G + 0.21R + 0.31B$$

It should be understood that this matrixing operation makes new colors from the RGB triad. In the R.C.A. system, it is the W, I, Q triad, not RGB, which is transmitted.

The relation of the R.C.A. and Land system is this. The R.C.A. triad, which is transmitted, is made up of three colors:

I, which defines the position of the color along the blue-green to orange-yellow axis of a color triangle,

Q, which defines the colors position along the magenta to green axis of a color triangle,

And W, which contains the luminence or black and white portion of the picture.

Observe: A three-color system made of only two color components and a brightness component! Two colors.

It should be noted that the I and Q signals add numerically to zero, which means that they carry no brightness information. On the other hand, the W signal adds to one.

I submit that the Land system is analogous to the R.C.A. system. It, too, has two color signals and a luminence signal. The luminence must be present in each of the records in the Land process, or else no record would be possible.

The direction of the I axis was not accidental. It was chosen because the eye is most acute to color differences along this axis. And, it may be noted that there is a blue-yellow color blindness, in which the person is able to distinguish only along the blue-yellow axis, which is roughly the same as the I axis.

Thus there is a strong correlation between the characteristics of the eye and those of the R.C.A. system.

In conclusion, I reiterate. Far from being made obsolete by the Land system, the R.C.A. system is a practical application of it.

(It is interesting to note, however, that you couldn't get I and Q from cameras with I and Q filters, because such filters would have to have negative transmittance to some frequencies.)—Richard Matzner, WNDU-TV, South Bend, Indiana

I still disagree—because the Land Process involves only two information channels, not three. Which three is not really significant; it's the fact that three must be handled that counts!

Dear Mr. Campbell:

It is now only a half an hour from the moment when I rushed madly to my mailbox, eager and ready to see what the latest news was on the Dean Device. It was while going through your latest article about Dean that one sentence rang a bell in my mind. This is where we come to the point of my letter.

If you go through the Brass Tacks

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section of the November 1951 issue of your magazine, take notice of a letter sent to you by Edgar R. Schot of a possible new type of drive based on the proper phasing of two electromagnets in regard to each other. In case you don't remember, you answered that "although action and reaction are Newtonionly equal and opposite—they aren't simultaneous!" It was this that I thought of when I saw your explanation in the November issue, quote, "The fault in the 'proof' is that while the two forces are equal and opposite, they do not have equal duration." Tell me, are they or aren't they based on the same phasing principle.

Enclosed is a copy of the last part of Schot's letter which I hope you will print for those of us who aren't old-timers. I also ask Schot, if he reads this to excuse me for my audacity in writing this letter but to remember I have vindicated myself by defending him. How about it? Is it or isn't it based on the same principle. From a reader who hopes to be with you many more years—Harry Sommer, 43-34 Union Street, Flushing 55, New York.

When a piece of soft iron is brought near the pole of a magnet, the effect of its field is to so affect the iron that it is attracted toward the magnet. The effect on the iron is to produce in it the condition which sets up a magnetic field of opposite polarity to that of the magnet. There are then two opposite fields interacting. The magnet and the iron move toward each other. In some manner the particles of iron, instead of moving at random within the mass, begin to move in a certain direction. Can this effect be produced by any other means?

What if you could have a magnet with only one pole? Would that mean it would move forever, or to tend to move through space?

The effect of a magnet is produced by its field. A field is propagated at the speed of light. If an electromagnetic pole of great strength is located in Missouri, and a piece of soft iron is located 186,000 miles away, it will take one second for the field of electromagnet to reach the soft iron and another second for the field induced in the soft iron to reach back to the electromagnet. The soft iron would build up its field and start to move toward the electromagnet after the electromagnet had been on for one second, but it would take another second for the field of the soft iron to reach back and cause the electromagnet to move toward the soft iron. If, just as the field of the soft iron reaches the electromagnet, the electromagnet changes its polarity, there will ensue a time during which both the electromagnet and the soft iron tend to move in the same direction. The soft iron will have been attracted toward the electromagnet, and the electromagnet will have been repelled away from the soft iron because the electromagnet changed its polarity. If the electromagnet retains its new field for two seconds, its field will move out to the

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soft iron and induce an opposite polarity in it, cause it to move toward the electromagnet and send its new field out. The new field will reach the electromagnet just as it changes polarity. Again we have both the electromagnet and the soft iron moving in the same direction. Thus, we have a cycle, which can be repeated.

Synchronize two electromagnets as above at a distance of one foot. How about it? Do we get propulsion or not?—Edgar R. Schot, Benton, Mo.

Sorry . . . not the same thing! I heard later that some experiments on Schot's idea had been tried, with the interesting conclusion that he had, in effect, derived the phenomenon of light-pressure—opposing electromagnetic fields!—in a new way. At any usable frequency, the energy radiated by the oscillating electromagnetic fields simply brings the thing down to the "photon drive".

Could be done . . . theoretically!

Dear John:

I meant to write this letter before and now that "In Times To Come" informs me that a new Kenneth Malone tale is soon to be upon us I must ask you this: How long has Leslie Chartereis been writing under the pseudonym of Mark Phillips? Or, if I'm wrong, is Mark Phillips paying Leslie Chartereis royalties for the use of the Chartereis style and the name John Henry Fernack of the New York Police?

I will confess that I didn't really catch on until the Fernack name popped up along with a reference to "another troublemaker" of years gone by. Oddly enough, the vigor, wit and style of the Mark Phillips stories which first made me compare them to Chartereis are the very things least in evidence in the current Saint stories. Am I wrong? If I am, my apologies to Mr. Phillips and my regrets to Mr. Chartereis.

As a reader of Astounding/Analog for ten years I guess I might as well add my poorly typewritten opinions to this. Obviously I enjoy the magazine or I wouldn't continue to buy it at the awful price of 50¢.

I enjoy Brass Tacks immensely—even when I don't understand it. I neither prefer nor object to the new title so long as the quality of the stories remains the same—August and September issues weren't too hot. I have a preference for fantasy and humor and a marked distaste for characters who laboriously spend 1,500 words describing How Civilization Got Here and then resolve the plot—unsatisfactorily—in about 500 words.

I *do* like your editorials. Even when they are a trifle long or when I think you are nuts. Because every now and then you come up with a gem I can treasure. (My favorite being—a misquote I am sure—"There's nothing worse than a completely honest, incorruptible man who knows he's right—and has the wrong facts.")

Have fun.—Don Culp, 3391 Barham Blvd., Hollywood 28, California.

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Mark Phillips is one of our two-headed authors—but neither head is Saintly.

Dear Mr. Campbell:

You can't use the Dean drive in an atomic submarine as proposed in your June issue because the submarine is too heavy. Take, for example, a typical nuclear-powered attack submarine, the Seawolf. You give the figure of three tons thrust for 150 horsepower in your issue. The Seawolf has 15,000 horsepower and so should be able to produce a 300-ton thrust. But its light displacement —from Jane's "Fighting Ships 1959-1960,' the same as the horsepower figure—is 3,260 tons. YOU CAN'T GET OFF THE GROUND BECAUSE YOU DON'T HAVE THE POWER. Granted that your Dean drive spaceship could use directly equipment, power systems, and experience from atomic submarines but can't use the submarine itself.

I agree with the rest of your ideas. Orthodoxy can develop to a deadly disease and Dean's drive is potentially the most important invention since the wheel.—Richard J. Weader, II, 98 Markham Place, Little Silver, New Jersey.

Hm-m-m—we'll need boosters for that first one hundred kelomiles, I guess. My error!

Dear J W C:

Re Dr. Dudley's article.

I would like to point out that the anomaly in maximum altitude attained by conducting and by nonconducting rockets might easily be due to effects not at all involving the earth's electric field.

In the first place, the electrical interaction between the rocket's shell and its exhaust gases is not discussed. It may well be that exhaust velocity is drastically influenced by attraction to or repulsion from the shell.

Second, and probably more significant is the influence of the rocket's electrostatic field upon the surrounding air. Since these rockets have low penetration and short impulse, peak altitude is very much dependent upon drag. Slight modification of the airflow characteristics by the rocket's field could have great effect upon trajectory. That this is happening seems likely, since the doctor relates that stability appears to be affected by charge, and stability depends largely upon aerodynamics.

It could be very instructive to see the results of a series of catapult launchings of rocket shells similar to those used in the experiment. If the anomaly still occurs, we can at least discount electrical interactions involving exhaust gases as a factor.—Robert O. Woods, Princeton, New Jersey.

This sounds like a good point, capable of direct test!

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Continued from Page 7

Any method of testing, any formal, logical, reasonably worked out and rationally structured technique of selecting those fit to rule . . . will be structured according to the examiners' theories of what "wise, benevolent and competent" means. The use of *any* rationally designed test simply means that the rationality of the test-builders is clamped on the examinees. They pass if they agree with the test-builders.

I suggest, therefore, that the selection of rulers must be based on some nonrational method! Some method which, because it does not involve any formal—or even hidden-postulate!—theory, will not allow any special philosophy of "wise, benevolent and competent" to be clamped on the future rulers.

One possible irrational method would, of course, be selection by random chance. I think it's not necessary to go into details as to the unsuitability of that particular nonrational method.

The method I propose is a nonrational method which, however, practically every logician will immediately claim is the very essence of rationality. It is, of course . . . in an *ex post facto* sense. I suggest a pure, nontheoretical pragmatic test.

Of course, since the ultimate goal of rationality and logic is the mapping of pragmatic reality, there's a strong tendency for logicians to claim that any real, pragmatic test is logical. That's not a valid statement; while it is true that a chain of reasoning is valid if, and only if, it correlates with reality, it is not true that a thing is real only if it correlates with logic.

A pragmatic test is, therefore, a nonrational test. It may be said that "It is rational to use a pragmatic test," but that doesn't make a pragmatic test a rational test. It does not depend on theory—and any rationality does.

The only way we can maintain flexibility of viewpoint in our rulers is to make their selection immune to theoretical determination.

Aristocracy operates on the theory that wise men have wise sons. The theory has value . . . but it isn't sound enough for reliable, long-term use. It gets into trouble because, *theoretically,* the son of the benevolent monarch will be benevolent, but practice turns up a not-quite-drooling idiot every now and then—and the theory of aristocracy can't acknowledge that.

The Communists hold the reasonable sounding proposition that only the politically educated should be allowed to vote. Therefore only Party members, who have been given a thorough education in political theory and practice, are permitted to vote. There's certainly a lot of sound value in that idea; it's not unlike Plato's carefully educated philosopher-kings as rulers. And suffers the same serious flaw; the way to pass an examination is to give the answers the examiner expects. The idea sounds good, but has the intrinsic difficulty that it

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rigidly perpetuates the political theories of the originators.

A theocracy accepts that only the dedicated priest is fit to rule, because his dedication to things above and beyond this world, and his communion with God, make him uniquely qualified. That system's worked fairly well, now and then.

Robert Heinlein, in his recent novel "Starship Trooper," proposed that only those who accepted the responsibility of defending the nation in the armed forces should have the right to vote. There are very few systems of selecting rulers that have not been tried somewhere, somewhen; that military-responsibility test for rulers has been tried. It works very well . . . so long as the military is run by wise, benevolent and competent instructors. That, however, as I've said, is true of any system of government whatever. In actual practice, the Roman Legions became the effective rulers of Rome during the Empire period—and the results were horrible. Anyone wishing to be Emperor need only bid for it, and if he offered the Legions enough money, they'd murder the current emperor, and install him. One Emperor lasted four days, as I remember it, before someone outbid him.

This, again, is based on the theory that the Legions *should* feel responsible.

Finally, the theory of popular democracy says "Let everyone vote; do no selecting of rulers, and there will be no unjust rulers in power."

That theory is fundamentally false, by ancient and repeated pragmatic test. Maybe it *should* be true, but it isn't. The most deadly dangerous, destructive and degrading of all possible rulers is installed in power when true Popular Democracy gets into power.

The difficulty is this; the old saw that "Power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely," is not quite correct: Power does not corrupt; no matter how great the power a man may hold, he will not become corrupt . . . *if he is not also immune.* It is immunity that corrupts; absolute immunity corrupts absolutely. I need very little power to be a force for unlimited destruction—if I am absolutely immune.

Therein lies the key to that horrible mass-entity known as the Mob. A mob has no organization that can be punished; it is immune.

The members of the mob are immune through anonymity. It has huge physical mass-power; it is immune to the resistance of its victims, and to the opposition of any normal police force. Only an army can disrupt a mob; even so, the mob cannot be punished—called to account and its immunity broken—because it simply disperses, and no one of the ordinary citizens who composed it is the mob, or "belongs to" the mob.

The immunity of the mob can produce a corrupting and degrading effect that utterly appalls those who were swept up in it, afterward. No viciously sadistic affair in the Roman Arena exceeds in corruption and

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degradation what a modern mob, anywhere in any nation today, including the United States, will do. The mob will do things that not one member of that mob will consider doing.

Immunity, and the sense of immunity, is the deadliest of corrupting influences. It is, in essence, simply the result of cutting off the normal negative feedback, the pain-messages that warn of excesses. Imagine yourself not only blinded, but deprived of all kinesthetic sense, so you could not tell where your limbs were, how hard your muscles were pulling, or whether you were touching anything; you would then be totally immune to external messages. You would certainly tear yourself to pieces in a matter of minutes.

The record of history seems to indicate one fundamental law of civilizations: *The Rulers must always be a minority group,* or the culture will be destroyed.

Note this: under the exact and literal interpretation of democracy, it is perfectly legitimate democracy for a ninety per cent majority to vote that the ten per cent minority be executed by public torture, in a Roman Arena style spectacle.

The advantage of having the Rulers a minority group is that, under those conditions, no group has the deadly feeling of immunity. The Rulers are a minority, and know it, and must rule circumspectly; like the *mahout* driving an elephant, they must rule always with the realization that they rule by sufferance only—not by inalienable right.

The majority, then, knows it is ruled—that it is not immune to punishment, that it is not free to become a mob.

True popular democracy—true rule by the majority—establishes the government of the mob. It was the growing influence of the people of Rome, under the venal and practically inoperative rule of the Legions—the Legions wanted money, not political responsibility; they were fools, rather than villains—that built up to the demand of "Corn and Games!" and the consequences that followed.

A minority group, aware that it is a minority group, is also aware of the problems of other minority groups through direct, personal experience.

Long ago, Machiavelli pointed out that the Prince cannot rule in the face of the active opposition of his people; the Prince must rule circumspectly, for he is a minority.

So whatever system of choosing Rulers we may select for our Utopia —it must be a system that never allows any group to achieve the position that, inevitably, every group wants to achieve—a position of security! The concept of "security" is, in essence, the same as "immunity"; I am secure if I am immune to all attack, or efforts to punish or compel me. The Rulers must never be secure; since they are to have the power of rule, they must not be a majority, so that there will be the ever-present insecurity of the potential threat of the great mass of people. The majority, on the other hand, must

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never have security from the power of their rulers—or they become a self-destructive mob.

This boils down to the proposition that we want a non-theoretical-rational test for selecting a minority group of people who will be, with high reliability, relatively wise, benevolent, and competent.

The simplest test for this, that does not depend on the rationale and prejudgment of the examiners, is the one the founders of the United States proposed—and which we have rejected. It's quite nontheoretical, and hence has a tendency to be exceedingly irritating to our sense of justice—sense of "what ought to be." The test is simply whether or not a man is competent to manage his own affairs in the real world about him; is he a successful man in the pragmatic terms of economic achievement?

The difference between a crackpot and a genius *is* that a genius makes a profit—that his idea is economically useful, that it returns more in product than it consumes in raw material.

Now it is perfectly true that competence does not guarantee benevolence. But it's also true we have, for this argument, agreed that we're not designing a constitution for Heaven, but for Utopia—an optimum engineering system, not a perfect system. Inasmuch as no one can define "benevolent," we're stuck on that one. But we can say this with pretty fair assurance: a man who consistently injures his associates will not have a successful business for long. A man may *hurt* his associates quite commonly, and be highly successful—provided his hurts are, however painful, essentially beneficial. The good dentist is a simple example. But the man who injures will not be successful for long; the "painless" dentist who is incompetent, and uses lavish anesthesia to cover up his butchery, for instance, doesn't *hurt* his patients, but won't remain in business long.

The founders of this nation proposed that a voter must have five thousand dollars worth of property—a simple economic test, perfectly pragmatic tied with no theoretical strings about how he garnered his five thousand dollars. The equivalent today would be somewhat nearer one hundred thousand dollars.

That particular form of the test is not quite optimum, I think; instead of a capital-owned test, an earned-income test would be wiser, probably. A man can inherit property, without inheriting the good sense of the father who garnered it. But earned-income is a test of *his* competence.

It violates our rational-theoretical sense of justice, because not all men have equal opportunities for education, a start in business, et cetera.

But we're seeking a non-theoretical, non- "just", purely pragmatic test, so that alone would not be an argument against the economic-success test.

Also—to use the dental analogy in another context—if a certain man wants to be a dentist, and has never

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had the opportunity to study the subject, but sets himself up as a dentist, and wants to work on your teeth . . . why shouldn't he? Is it his fault he never had an opportunity to go to dental school? Why shouldn't he start trying out his own, original ideas on your teeth . . . ?

Are you being unfair to him if you refuse to allow him to practice on you?

And are you being unfair when you refuse to allow a man who never had an opportunity for an adequate education to practice on your nation's affairs? Look, friend—this business of running a nation isn't a game of patty-cake; it's for blood, sweat and tears, you know. It's sad that the guy didn't have all the opportunities he might have . . . but the pragmatic fact is that he didn't, and the fact that he can't make a success of his own private affairs is excellent reason for taking the purely pragmatic, nontheoretical position that that is, in itself, reason for rejecting his vote on national affairs.

There's another side to this progmatic test, however; neither Abraham Lincoln, George Washington Carver, nor Thomas Edison ever had an adequate opportunity for education. The guy who bellyaches that his failure in life is due to lack of opportunity has to explain away such successful people as those three before he has any right to blame all his misfortunes on the hard, cruel world around. Those three individuals all get the vote, aristocrats, and formal intellectualists to the contrary notwithstanding. One un (formally) educated frontiersman, one Negro born a slave, and one nobody who never got beyond grammar school; three properly qualified Rulers. They made a success of their private affairs; let them have a hand in the nation's affairs. We do not care who their parents were; we need not concern ourselves with their children, for the children will vote only if they, themselves make a success of their own private affairs.

Let's make the Test for Rulers simply that the individual's earned annual income must be in the highest twenty per cent of the population. This automatically makes them a minority group, selected by a pragmatic test. It bars no one, on any theoretical or rationalized grounds whatever; any man who demonstrates that he can handle his private affairs with more than ordinary success is a Voter, a Ruler.

The earned-annual-income figure might be determined by averaging the individual's actual income over the preceding ten per cent of his life, taken to the nearest year. Thus if someone eighteen years old has, for two years, been averaging in the top twenty per cent—he votes. He may be young, but he's obviously abnormally competent. The system also lops off those who are falling into senility. It automatically adjusts to inflation and/or recession.

It isn't perfect; remember we're designing Utopia, not Heaven. We *must not* specify how the income is

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earned; to do so would put theory-rationalizations back in control. If a man makes fifty thousand dollars a year as a professional gambler—he votes. Anybody who guesses right that consistently has a talent the nation needs.

There may be many teachers, ministers, and the like, who by reason of their dedication to their profession do not make the required income level. If they're competent teachers and ministers, however, they'll have many votes—through their influence on their students or parishioners. If they're incompetent, they will have small influence, and deserve no vote.

The economic test does not guarantee benevolence; it does guarantee more-than-average competence, when so large a number as twenty per cent of the population is included. And while it doesn't guarantee benevolence—it provides a very high probability, for each successful man is being judged-in-action by his neighbors and associates. They would not trade with him, or consult him, if his work were consistently injurious.

There are exceptions, those eternally-puzzling areas of human disagreement between sincerely professed theory, and actual practice. Prostitution is perhaps the clearest example; for all the years of civilized history, prostitution has been condemned. It's been legislated against, and its practitioners scorned . . . by the same population that, through all the years of civilized history have continued to support in action that ancient and dishonored institution.

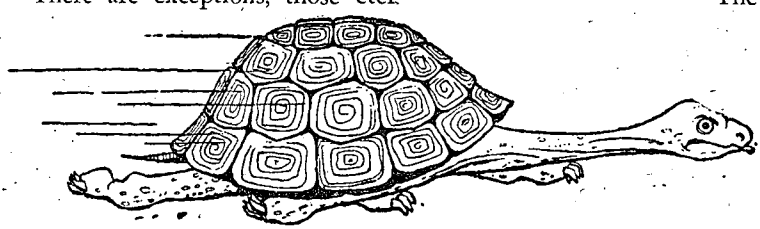
The people who voted to keep Prohibition on the books were also those who contributed to the high income of bootleggers.

There are many such areas of human ambivalence; no theoretical or rational solution appears to be in sight. The simple fact remains that, by popular vote-in-action, not in theory, prostitution, illegal gambling, and various other socially-denounced institutions continue to win wide popular support.

So . . . Utopia still won't be Heaven. But maybe we can say it will never be a Blue Nose Hell, either!

O.K., friends—now it's your turn!

The Editor.



Behold the tortoise: He maketh no progress unless he sticketh out his neck

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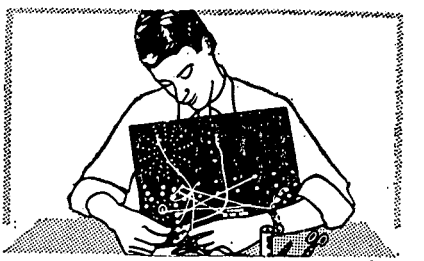

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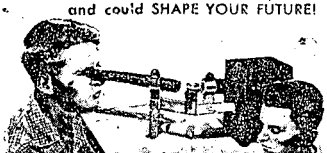

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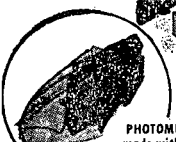

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